FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS

TRIUMPH OF THE SWARM
French light infantry in the 18th century

WWI

ADMIRAL HIPPER
Germany's greatest naval commander?

WWII

THE BLONDE BEAST
Assassinating Reinhard Heydrich

MILITARY HISTORY

www.military-history.org

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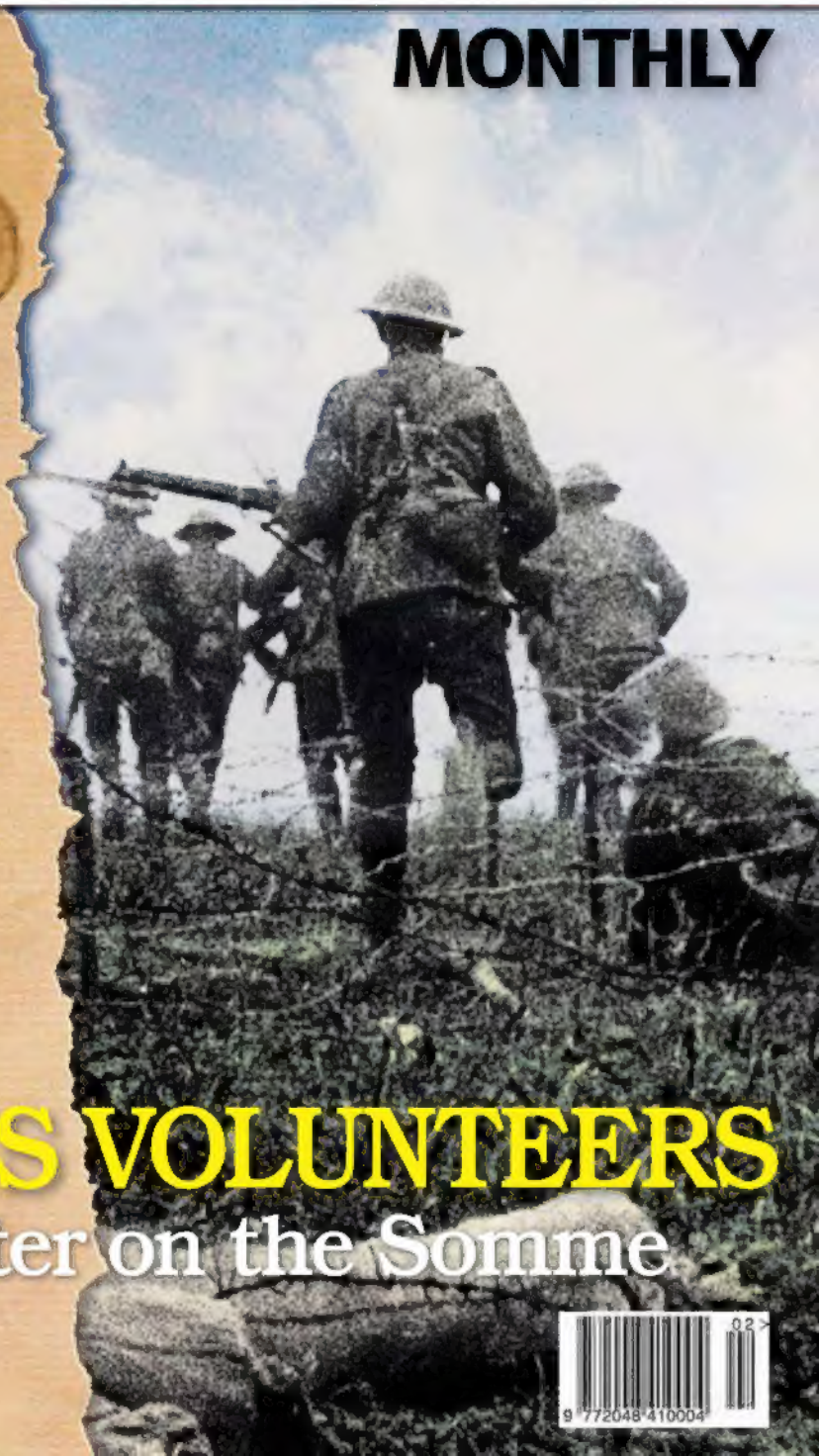

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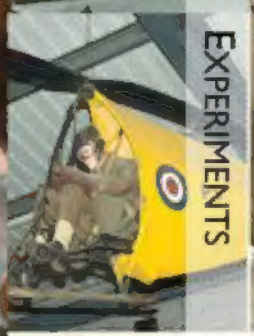

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ON THE COVER:
The famous WWI recruitment poster of Lord Kitchener, contrasted with the reality of battle.

Photo Ward Digital

Welcome

By Dr Neil Faulkner

What more is there to be said about the Somme? With the possible exception of Waterloo, it is perhaps the most written-about battle in British history.

It has been a compelling subject for almost a century because it represents a terrible coming of age – the moment when the innocence of hundreds of thousands of British volunteers, the idealistic young men who had heeded the call of 'king and country' in 1914, was shattered in an inferno of industrialised slaughter. That, combined with the sheer scale of the casualties and the monumental stupidity and futility of it all, has made the Somme the iconic British battle of the 20th century.

So what more is there to say? Much more, it seems. For the traditional view is under attack from a new generation of 'revisionist' historians. Haig, architect of the Somme and later of Passchendaele, along with many other First World War generals, is being rehabilitated. The Somme is being reinterpreted as 'a necessary sacrifice'. The British Empire is being recast as one of history's 'Good Things'.

So the debate about the battle is unfinished after all, and we lead this issue with our assessment of how it transformed the British Army, and how, in our view, it exposed a glaring contradiction between a high command and a military doctrine based on colonial small wars and the demands of 20th-century warfare on European battlefields.

Also this issue: Richard Freeman asks whether Franz von Hipper was perhaps Germany's finest admiral; James Stejskal probes the morality of assassinating Nazi chief Reinhard Heydrich and triggering predictable Gestapo massacres; Tim Candlish analyses the reinvention of light-infantry warfare during the French Revolution; and Peter Neville charts the rise of the Vietnamese guerrilla army that ended imperial rule.

Neil Faulkner.

Who we are:

Military History Monthly aims to cover conflict on land, at sea, and in the air through all periods of history, with expert commentary written in an intelligent and accessible way.

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We would love to hear your opinions on this issue of the magazine. What are your favourite bits? What should we cover next issue? You can give us your feedback:

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DISPATCHES

Our round-up of this month's military history news stories.

SEARCH FOR THE SPITFIRES BURIED IN BURMA

Archaeologists, scientists, historians, and representatives from Wargaming America assembled at the Imperial War Museum recently to propose their plans for a ground-breaking new dig.

Beneath the ground of Mingaladon, just outside Rangoon in Burma, 36 Spitfires are believed to have been buried by RAF pilots in 1945. Supposedly under the orders of Lord Mountbatten, 60 aircraft in total were apparently disassembled, bundled into crates, and concealed across three different sites in Burma.

David Cundall of Lincolnshire is the farmer and aviation enthusiast who has pumped in thousands of pounds and spent 16 years researching the project. He is now spearheading the dig, due to start in the New Year, in the hope that he will finally be able to solve the mystery.

He said: 'I have been flying aeroplanes for 45 years and been digging up sites looking for military aircraft for 36 years. It's in my blood.'

Having heard the story of the buried planes, Cundall sought eye-witness accounts from American and British service personnel, as well as local people, who told him how scores of brand new Mark XIV Spitfires had been buried in 1945.

One local Burmese man recalled how, as a 15-year-old, he and his father had transported timber that had been used as the Spitfires were buried. The local man led him to the spot where the planes had been put.

However, other than signs of increased electrical conductivity in the area – which could suggest the presence of metal roughly 10m underground – no definite evidence has yet been uncovered.

Although acknowledging that the dig could turn out to be fruitless, project archaeologist Andy Brockman said, 'It could also be one of the most fascinating discoveries in aviation archaeology.'

Likening the project to a crime scene, he added: 'We have no conclusive evidence about how the Spitfires arrived in Burma – or if they arrived at all. What we are here to do is resolve that.'

He remains confident that if the Spitfires are found, it might be possible to fly them again; some may be back home in early 2013. But their restoration would be a lengthy and costly process, between £2m and £3m according to one specialist estimate.

It is fortunate, then, that war-gaming company Wargaming.net, have offered to provide financial backing for the search.

Wargaming.net's Chief Executive, Victor Kislyi, said: 'We are looking for these beautiful war machines hidden somewhere in the tropical jungle. It sounds like Indiana Jones. We hope to see a squadron of Spitfires flying over London.'

Cundall's perseverance will pay off if any Spitfires do emerge, with his share in any discoveries pegged at 30% of any money raised. His agent and the Burmese government will share the remainder, with the government's 50% share expected to be up for sale.

Meanwhile, Cundall said he had letters from the British government releasing any ownership rights.

Downing Street welcomed the latest moves, after Prime Minister David Cameron met Burmese President Thein Sein last summer.

When asked what his reaction would be if they actually found any Spitfires, Cundall said it would be like when the archaeologist searching for Tutankhamun's tomb peered into the site. He was asked if he could see anything, and replied 'Yes, wonderful things'.

'That's what I'll say,' he commented in closing. 'I can see wonderful things.'

Honouring Henry's importance

It is the vantage point from which Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower, and King George VI surveyed soldiers on a practice exercise in anticipation of the imminent invasion of Europe.

Now, Fort Henry in Dorset has just been given a Grade II listing in recognition of its historical significance. Nearby Second World War beach-defences, including gun-emplacements, pill-boxes, and concrete anti-tank 'pimples', have also been listed for protection.

Although English Heritage has previously listed the building because of its historical associations, design, and good state of preservation, this is the first time the fort has been listed for its historical importance.

In the run-up to D-Day in 1944, Studland Bay was the scene of the largest live-ammunition practice of the entire war. Thousands of troops took part in Exercise Smash, a full-scale rehearsal for the expected invasion. The bay was considered a possible target for a German invasion, and so was heavily fortified from 1940 onwards.

In April 1944 the fort was used by George VI, Churchill, and Eisenhower, along with General Bernard Montgomery and Acting-Admiral Louis Mountbatten to watch the exercise.

The group watched a demonstration of carpet bombing followed by an assault landing by troops.

The use of live ammunition in a rehearsal run was not regular practice, but military brass wanted it to be as realistic as possible for the soldiers.

Built in 1943, the fort was a specially constructed concrete bunker and observation post. It was 90 feet long, with walls, floor, and ceiling all three feet thick, and was considered a safe place for the group to witness this rehearsal of the Normandy landings.

Visitors can now go inside the bunker and look through the same observation slit the leaders used to view the exercise.

An English Heritage spokesman said, 'Fort Henry provides an impression of the scale and significance of the preparations for D-Day and is associated with the most prominent figures of the Allied forces.

'Studland Bay is known for its beaches and wildlife, but it is great that its role in the Second World War has now been recognised.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

RAF MUSEUM SECURES GRANT

The RAF Museum recently announced that it has received £64,000 to digitise, preserve, and provide public access to around 300,000 First World War personnel records as part of a new permanent exhibition.

The grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund will enable the museum to complete the conservation and digitisation of RFC, RNAS, and RAF personnel records, and enable public access both online and in the gallery.

The museum is to mark the centenary of the First World War by creating a major new exhibition that will tell the less well-known story of 'The First War in the Air' through a diverse range of human stories and exhibits.

HERO'S MEDALS AUCTIONED

The audacious story of how an RAF pilot flew down the Champs-Elysées to drop a French *tricoleur* over Nazi-occupied Paris has emerged after his medals were put up for sale at a recent auction.

In a daring raid intended to boost the morale of the French, Wing-Commander Ken Gatward flew over Paris, leaving a huge French flag on top of the Arc de Triomphe, before heading towards the Gestapo headquarters which he raked with 20mm shells.

The attack sent the German SS troops running for their lives, to the delight of Parisians.

Wing Commander Gatward's actions were enthusiastically received by both British and French, and celebrated in British newspaper cartoons.

WAR AND PEACE REVISITED

The War and Peace Show, held in Kent for 30 years, is going into battle with a new name and a new home in Hellfire Corner.

Organiser Rex Cadman decided it needed refreshing, so after 25 years at the Hop Farm, the War and Peace Revival will now be held at the Folkestone Racecourse site, near Hythe.

The world's biggest military vehicle expo, which a few years ago suffered bad publicity over the attendance of alleged Nazi sympathisers, started in 1982 as a small club event run by the Invicta Military Vehicle Preservation Society. It then featured just 100 vehicles.

It now attracts thousands to displays of military vehicles and battle re-enactments, as well as giving visitors a rare opportunity to meet veterans of the Second World War and other conflicts.

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THE AGONY OF AFGHANISTAN

To encourage debate, we are instituting an Editorial page alongside our established Opinion and Letters pages. Our occasional Editorials will be written in-house, and our Opinion and Letters pages will henceforward be reserved entirely for our readers. So, if you disagree with an Editorial, or anything else in the magazine, get writing and let us know.

Left The British defeat at Maiwand in 1880 set the seal on the disaster of the Second Afghan War.

Image: WIPL

The Fifth Afghan War – for such it is – began on 7 October 2001. It has now lasted longer than the First and Second World Wars combined. And it is public knowledge – confirmed by the Wikileaks revelations in 2010 – that the insurgency is at a peak and the war more unwinnable than ever.

Reliable statistics about the Afghan War are few. Either no-one is counting or those who are have no interest in reporting their tallies. Suffice it to say that, almost certainly, hundreds of thousands have died as a direct or indirect consequence of the war, that millions have been displaced, and that virtually no Afghan family has escaped the consequences of the conflict.

The war has also locked Afghanistan into a medieval state of backwardness. Only three countries in the world rank lower in the UN indices of poverty. Life expectancy has fallen since 2003 to just 43 years. Infant mortality has risen to 135 per 1,000 births. An estimated one in three Afghans goes hungry every day. Two in three have no access to clean water.

Profiteering and corruption are universal. Warlords, narcotics dealers, corporate contractors, and politicians and government bureaucrats have grown rich on the flow of funds for arms, opium, and what official communiqués call 'development aid'. Some of the war-rich are based in Pakistan. Others are ensconced in Kabul's fortified Green Zones (with monthly rents around $15,000: twenty times the Afghan average annual income).

None of the original justifications for the war holds up. Osama bin Laden is dead and al-Qaeda's main bases are now elsewhere. Opium production increased tenfold in the first year of the occupation and now represents 90% of the global total. A 2008 UN study reckoned that women were more oppressed in Afghanistan than in any other country in the world except Niger. There has been no serious economic development since the Russian invasion in 1979 – Afghanistan remains what it was then: a country of villages, where 90% of the population live, and where a majority are so poor that they need to spend their entire incomes on food simply to stay alive.

The occupation is to blame. In the first four years, from 2001 to 2005, the Afghans were so weary of war – first against the Russians in the 1980s, then against each other in the 1990s – that most accepted the Anglo-American invasion in the desperate hope that it might represent improvement. But the invaders did not leave, and the Afghans grew resentful – of occupation, corruption, and underdevelopment. And as resistance mounted, so did repression; and the age-old cycle began to turn again.

For this is the Fifth Afghan War. It was preceded by four other wars in which the Afghans have defeated foreign invaders and maintained their independence – though often at terrible cost, both to themselves and their antagonists. The first three were against the British (in 1839-1842, 1878-1880, and 1919), while the fourth was against the Russians (1979-1989). The latest war has proved the most intractable; but it is no less hopeless.

The insurgency has long since passed the point at which the war becomes unwinnable. This is the point where every 'surge', every increase in boots on the ground and bombers in the sky, simply escalates the violence, the suffering, the bitterness, and therefore the resistance.

And here is the greatest failure of all. For the occupation creates the very insurgency it is supposed to repress. Every angry young Afghan who wants to fight the foreign soldiers and their corrupt local clients turns to the local Taliban. It may be led by warlords, village mullahs, and wife-beaters – by some of the most reactionary elements in Afghan society – but it is the Taliban that provides the guns and the training. The Anglo-American invaders are the petrol feeding Afghanistan's fire and prolonging its agony.

It is time to end this madness.

> The Anglo-American invaders are the petrol feeding Afghanistan's fire and prolonging its agony.

MILITARY HISTORY FROM AN EARLY AGE

David Flintham puts the case for teaching kids military history.

David Flintham is a freelance military historian specialising in 17th-century fortifications.

The recently announced plans to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War put particular focus on secondary schools. Quite right too, but what about children of primary-school age? As military history *per se* falls very much outside the school curriculum, for a pre-secondary pupil to have any sort of interest in military history is something to be nurtured at home.

When I was my son's age (eight), it was common to be interested in warfare. The Second World War was less than 30 years in the past and I seemed to be brought up on a diet of war-comics, castles, toy guns, toy soldiers, and war films. And I'm sure that I'm not the only one whose interest in military history was spawned in childhood during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

But things have moved on and tales of war are less accessible. So where are future generations of military historians going to come from?

That my son has an interest in military history is not surprising, given my own interests and the fact that he is surrounded by hundreds of books on the subject. But this is not something forced upon him (although he is encouraged when he shows an interest).

It is one thing to have an interest, but another to encourage and develop it, especially when the subject is a history of violence, death, suffering, and destruction.

So it is a subject that must be treated with great care. One must be vigilant about what is suitable for the young military historian and what is not. Fortunately, there are a great number of books on military history written especially for the younger reader – although it is impossible to limit reading to these alone (witness the monthly rush to get to my copy of *Military History Monthly* first!).

But as long as I vet things beforehand, reading a wider range of books is possible (we both enjoy looking at *MHM* together, and the Osprey titles are firm favourites). The same applies to film and television (and it almost goes without saying that *Horrible Histories* are very popular).

Out and about, museums, castles, and battlefields are all popular places to visit. Castles and fortifications (and, as our last summer holiday proved, Atlantic Wall bunkers) are all exciting to explore. Battlefields, if easy to interpret, are popular, and there are several museums that we visit time and again. When it comes to museums, content that appeals to children – tanks and aeroplanes of course, models, waxworks, and dioramas, and anything 'hands-on' – is important, as is the opportunity to let off steam.

I look at museums differently now. An eight-year-old's perspective is certainly different, and catering for pre-secondary kids encourages family visits. Of course, there needs to be a balance between the demands of the younger visitor and those of others (while the National Army Museum's Kids Space is excellent, that it is at the expense of the gallery telling the story of the first 150 or so years of the British Army is a problem).

An eight-year-old is too young to understand the tragedy of warfare, but visiting military cemeteries does lead to some awareness of its impact. My son's interest also gives him some appreciation of who he is and where he comes from (seven members of our family fought during the Great War, and four of them were killed). It builds a sense of why Remembrance Day is important and a sense of how things that happen in the past affect us today.

Only time will tell what direction my son's interest will take in the future, but don't forget that every military historian was once aged eight!

> I seemed to be brought up on a diet of war-comics, castles, toy guns, toy soldiers, and war films.

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'WE DID NOT KNOW'

The human touch: stories of war and conflict witnessed by *MHM* readers.

Melanie Wimmer is a journalism graduate from the University of Kent with an interest in modern history.

Left Anni Krimmer with her family. Her father was no supporter of Hitler, but argued that, after the end of WWI, Hitler did supply food and work for local people.

PART 2 Germany, 1939-1945

Melanie Wimmer takes a critical look at the last testimonies of the Third Reich. Last month's issue looked at the rise of anti-Semitism and Nazi youth movements. This month she considers education and the war years.

'Looking back, I think that one of the families was Jewish, because we suddenly didn't see them anymore. In the house next door there was a young family with a child and they lived on the fourth floor. As children we noticed that on the other side of the street there were young people as well, who were hearing and speech impaired. They always communicated with signs across the street. Suddenly they were gone. We never saw them again.'

Edit Dzubinski was born in Berlin in 1928 and was brought up under the influence of Hitler's youth movements. Only much later did she discover the truth about what was going on in Nazi Germany.

Education

Education remained compulsory throughout the war, but a lot changed in the era of National Socialism. At first there were crucifixes on the walls of the classrooms and people were praying to God, but soon the crucifixes were gone and religious education was banned. The *Fuhrer* now took God's place, and people were greeting each other with '*Heil Hitler*' and the Nazi salute.

Schoolchildren did not learn much about the Nazi regime Elli Dzubinski remembered. 'Once we had to write an essay about the difference between Communism and National Socialism. I sat in front of it and didn't know what to write. Then I asked: "Dad, what should I write?" He said: "They are all the same. One is wearing a red shirt and the other a brown one." My mum interrupted: "Shh! You are telling her something we are not allowed to say. Who knows what is going to happen."'

Anni Krimmer, now 86, still remembered the rhyme *Dem Führer* ('For the Führer') by Will Vesper, which she had to recite at school:

And so it means once more in the custom of our forefathers.
The Führer rises out of the people's midst.
They knew then not crown nor throne
The men were led by their bravest son, the freest of the free!
Only his own doing gave him the consecration and God's blessing!
And so his doing created dignity and class.
He, who led his army, was named duke.
Duke of the Kingdom, in the way we mean, you have been for long in the hearts of your subjects.

Of course, she explained, 'It was all about Hitler.'

Hitler as 'benefactor'

Hitler was indeed 'in the hearts of his subjects', as he established a sense of belonging and purpose among the population again. After a draining defeat in the First World War, Germany's economy was devastated, but Hitler seemed to be able to provide people with a better life.

Anni Krimmer admitted: 'I actually saw Hitler as a benefactor because when he came to power times got better. The motorway was close to where we lived, and people had work again. They had enough money to bring their shoes to my father, who was a shoemaker. Before they had cut out parts of old bicycle tubes and stapled them on their shoe soles.

'My father was genuinely not a supporter of Hitler, but he said he gave people work and bread, and that was really important after such hard times. Everyone agreed that we were someone again because before we were nobody abroad.

'I now see, however, that a regime can't always live like this, even though it could improve people's lives. Yet it just doesn't work because if you don't have anything anymore, you have to stop, but he invaded countries or took it from the Jews. Until today I still don't understand why he was so against the Jews because they hadn't done anything to him.'

Thought control

The image of Hitler as a benefactor was the result of propaganda, thought control, real material improvements, and apparent Nazi foreign-policy triumphs. The youth movements especially gave children a feeling of responsibility and belonging; many felt it an honour to serve the *Führer*.

However, there was the threat of concentration camps and the Gestapo, and the fear that even your own children, neighbours, or friends might report on you. Marianne Rater, the daughter of a wealthy doctor, said: 'It was so dangerous and there was so much pressure that one couldn't say anything. My father only told some of his friends and our family that the war was going to be worse, but he had to be careful not to say that he was against the war to his patients. He would have been put into a concentration camp immediately.'

'We did not know about it'

Witnesses claim that in the era of the Third Reich there was a lack of official information. *Zeitungszeugen* is a project to reprint articles from WWII and have them explained by experts, so people can discover for themselves how much information was available in newspapers at that time. *Zeitungszeugen* seeks to show that much public information was propaganda, and that atrocities were hushed up

Newspapers and magazines, however, were not the only source of information. Some turned to foreign radio stations to lift the fog of war and cut through Nazi propaganda. Marianne Ritter remembered: 'My mother got the news from London from a Swiss radio channel, even though listening to foreign radio stations was illegal and could even be punished

Above *Pst! Feind hört mit* ('Shh! The enemy is listening'). Elli Dzubinski remembers being told nothing of concentration camps, hardly surprising considering the people of Germany were being encouraged to keep quiet about anything they knew regarding Nazi machinations.

with the death penalty. Our radio receiver was in the study and I can remember that my mother always said "Children, be quiet. I have to listen to cooking recipes now." And then she would disappear into the study and listen to radio Baromünster

'No one could find out about this. Radio Baromünster explained the war situation as it was, and how far the Americans had come. We were hoping that the Americans would come quicker than the Russians because, even as a young girl, I heard how the Russians treated women, and towards the end of the war they told me a lot of atrocity tales. It was terrifying.'

The limits on official information bred rumours and guesses, even among children. Marianne Ritter recalled: 'As children we didn't know anything about concentration camps, but someone once said, like children talk, "They made soap out of Jews." But no one could imagine it. I remember that sentence until today

'But we didn't have any Jewish friends. I only know one thing my mother had an old admirer, who was married to a Jewish woman. He actually wanted to get a divorce, but he didn't in order to save her from being deported, and he succeeded Therefore, he only got a divorce after the war.'

The fate of the Jews

In September 1935 the Nuremberg Laws had banned such marriages. The admirer and his wife's marriage was one of ▷

Left As a child, Anni Krimmer was unaware what was happening to the Jews in Germany until they – along with children with disabilities – began to disappear

Above Willi Zimmerling (front left) marching with his regiment. As *Untersturmführer* in Berlin, Willi remembers being given a company of young boys of 16 or 17 years of age.

Below Willi Zimmerling (second row, second on the right) enjoys a rare resting point with his comrades.

the 20,434 existing marriages that were allowed to continue However, Jews living with 'Aryan' partners were restricted in employment opportunities and had to obey a set of strict regulations. But, until shortly before the end of the war, they were spared deportation and escaped genocide.

Elli Dzubinski: 'At school I never heard anything about the concentration camps, but my parents might have known about it. Yet on advertising pillars there were posters, which pictured three people and it said "Shh! The enemy is listening." One shouldn't stand on the streets in a threesome and talk about politics.'

Anni Krimmer looks out of the window: 'I know that up there, where the bank is, there was a box, on which was written, "The Jews are our misfortune." Articles from the *Stürmer*, an anti-Semitic newspaper, were put up in there and we saw them, but didn't think anything of it. Of course we were only children, but I can't remember that my father said anything about it.

'My daughter-in-law once said, "You don't want to tell me you didn't know that there was a concentration camp up there." Of course there was a concentration camp, but those we knew that were put there were alcoholics. One of them always beat his wife when he came home drunk. They had three children and she went to clean to earn a bit of money, but she then had to give the money to him or he would have hit her. One day it was said he died of pneumonia, but no one was surprised because of his drinking habit. No one knew that people were being murdered in those camps, because things weren't talked or written about like nowadays. There was no freedom of press like today.'

Many knew of concentration camps, and many suspected the truth. But fear, ignorance, and propaganda limited people's engagement with the dark realities of the Nazi regime. 'We didn't know' frequently appears in eye-witness accounts. 'However, people who wanted to know could have known. There was an awareness that some horrible things were going on, but people chose not to know,' argues Dr Daniel Siemens, a lecturer in Modern German History at University College London.

Resistance

Only a few chose to resist. In June 1942, students from the University of Munich, known as 'the White Rose', called on Germans to oppose Hitler's regime actively. They were arrested and beheaded in 1943.

Particularly in the countryside, there was little opposition. Anni Krimmer believed it would not have been possible: 'We couldn't have done anything except move abroad and say

something there. We couldn't have changed anything here because they would have put us into concentration camps. And no one dared to shoot Hitler, because there was so much military and all of them had to vow to defend their fatherland. Insurgency like it is happening today would not have worked.'

Siemens explains: 'The general feeling was that you couldn't do anything against it. The Nazi Party made it clear that you had to decide. And people chose to go with the majority. There was a lack of solidarity with people you knew.'

Towards the end

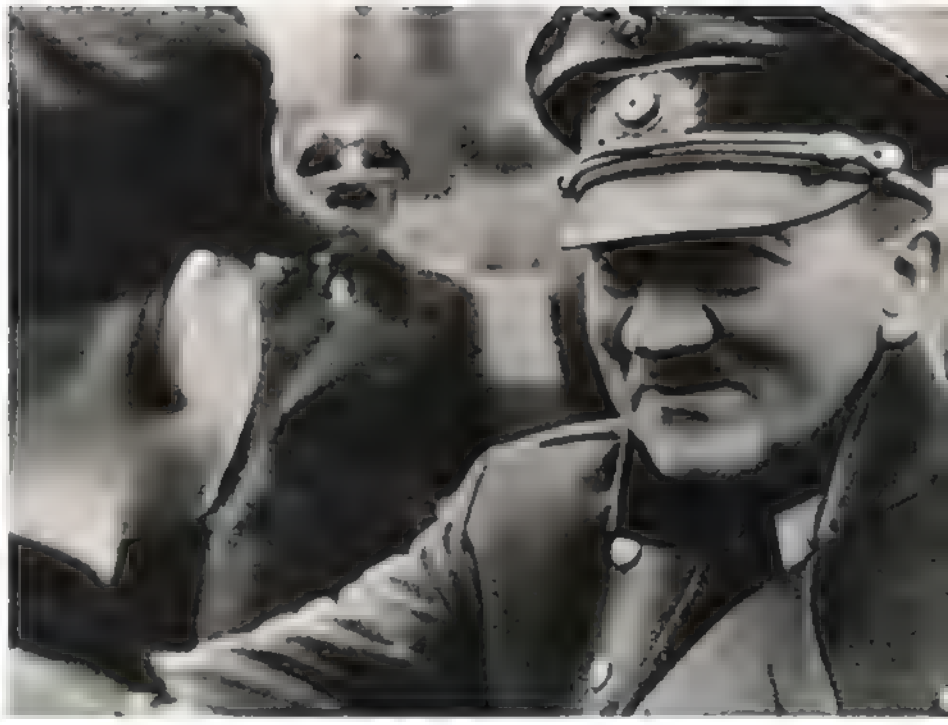
Willi Zimmerling recalled the Russian advance: 'I was an *Untersturmführer* in Berlin and got a company of young boys of 16 or 17 years of age – Hitler Youth. In the morning there was a report that there was no one in the battalion, as the commander had run away. I went to the west with the boys, where the streets were full of refugees and the Russians were shooting into the crowds.

'I was supposed to stay there and the boys would have fought until the end, but my father had told me not to get shot because of Hitler. When we came across a bridge, there was a general with a gun, and when I said that this was the rest of the battalion, he told me to go towards Berlin. We went a few kilometres until he couldn't see us anymore, and then we escaped and went towards the north up to Hamburg. Near Berlin there were schoolboys in Hitler uniforms, 14 years of age, with bazookas, going towards the Russians. I should have told them to go home, but they would have called me a coward because they had already been playing war games since the age of 10.'

Conscription call

Towards the end of the war, in September 1944, Hitler called up all remaining males between 16 and 60 in Germany for army service. Günter Kulsch, then 18 years of age, received a letter from the SS school in Vienna: 'I have never run so fast. I went to the Navy and said I wanted to join because my grandfather said: "Kids, the war is soon over." And I was lucky to be in the Navy, because those who went to the SS school are all dead as they had to go to Russia and the Russians were on the advance.'

Marianne Ritter: 'In the last weeks of the war my brother received a conscription call to be one of "the werewolves", the really young boys. However, my father disposed of the letter. If this had ever come out then they would have taken him to a concentration camp, but luckily it was right at the end of the war.'



Above 'In the minds of his subjects' Anni Krimmer admits to seeing Hitler as a benefactor when he first came to power.

Above right Willi Zimmerling stands with two colleagues in front a German tank. **Right** Lying in a snowy ditch, Willi and a fellow soldier arm a small artillery weapon.

A History of the

BRITISH ARMY

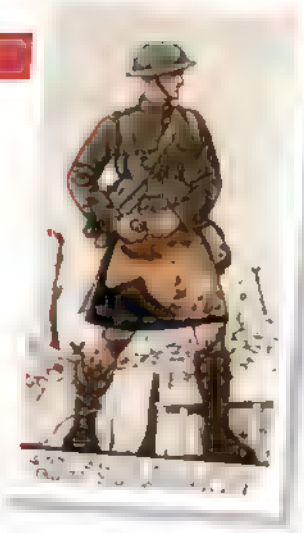
IN 25 BATTLES

THE SOMME, 1916

THE SOMME, 1916

A Territorial battalion storms a German position at Pozières on the Somme on 23 July 1916. This oil painting by William Barns Wollen (1857-1936) gives a highly romanticised view of trench warfare.

Right General Sir Henry Rawlinson (1864-1925), commander of the BEF's Fourth Army during the Battle of the Somme.



THE SOMME

24 June-13 November 1916

The First World War entered its third phase at the beginning of 1916. Britain's old Regular Army had been largely destroyed by the end of 1914. The Territorials had been wasted in a succession of futile mini-offensives during 1915. Now it was the turn of the new mass armies of Kitchener Volunteers.

Images: WPL

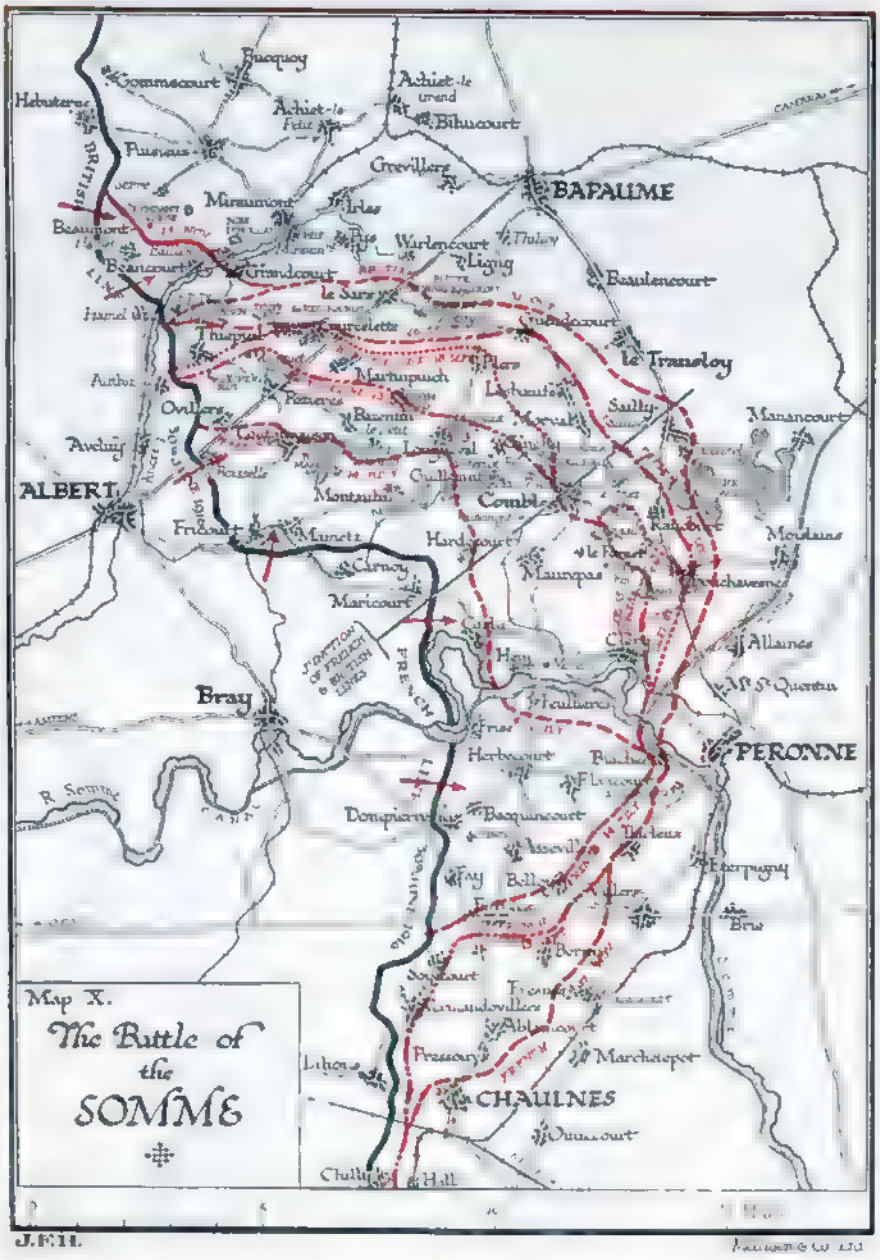
The failures and frustrations of 1915 brought down ministers and generals at the year's end. The great Liberal government formed as long ago as 1906 collapsed, to be replaced by a wartime coalition of Liberals, Tories, and Socialists. Kitchener's role was diminished with the appointment of Sir William Robertson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and Sir John French was sacked as Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France and replaced by Sir Douglas Haig.

In the tussle between 'frock-coats' (politicians) and 'brass-hats' (generals), the balance swung from the former to the latter, from support for 'eastern' adventures like Gallipoli to a 'western' focus on the main battlefront in Belgium and north-western France. Here was the main enemy. Here was the bulk of the Imperial German Army. Here was where a great swathe of *Entente* territory was occupied by the Central Powers. Here, the generals insisted, was where the war would have to be won.

Easterners and westerners

The argument between 'easterners' and 'westerners' was a re-run of the age-old argument between advocates

Left French artist Georges Leroux's depiction of the Battle of Verdun. The battle raged throughout 1916, becoming an apocalyptic battle of attrition as the German High Command attempted to 'bleed France to death'.



Right Plan of the Battle of the Somme. Note that the offensive failed entirely in the northern sector, but there were limited gains in the south on 1 July. These were subsequently enlarged in two major attacks on 14 July and 15 September, and otherwise in a series of local attacks that continued into November. The battlefield was chosen mainly because the River Somme marked the boundary between the British and French armies.

of 'maritime' and 'continental' strategies. The British, traditionally, had maintained a strong navy – to guard against invasion, to protect overseas trade, and to build an empire – and only a small army. In consequence, Britain was usually obliged to try to avoid large-scale land warfare in Europe, the preference being to subsidise continental allies to do most of any essential fighting. The problem, repeatedly, was that this 'strategy of evasion' ran the risk that a single state might overturn the European balance of power, achieve Europe-wide hegemony, and thus come to threaten British maritime dominance.

The British deployed about three million men on secondary fronts during the First World War – primarily in the Balkans, in Palestine, in Mesopotamia, and in East Africa. The diseconomy of force was perhaps most extreme in East Africa, where General von Lettow-Vorbeck – the German 'Lawrence' – tied down 370,000 British Empire troops with a force of some 3,500 Germans and 12,000 Africans. Von Lettow-Vorbeck's tiny army was completely cut off from the Fatherland and cost the German Government nothing to maintain. The East African campaign, which continued until after the Armistice in November 1918, therefore had no impact whatsoever on the outcome of the war.

The British were trying to do what they usually did, seize the chance to expand their empire while others did most of the fighting on the main fronts. But the risk was always that the resistance of Britain's continental allies would collapse. This was precisely what the German High Command intended should happen, and, in the first half of 1916, came close to achieving

Verdun

By the end of 1915, the French had lost a million men on the Western Front. 'The strain on France has almost reached breaking-point,' wrote Field-Marshal von Falkenhayn, the German Commander-in-Chief. Though a breakthrough on the Western Front was beyond Germany's means, he felt that something short of that might turn into a crippling battle of attrition if the right target was chosen, a place of supreme strategic and political significance, where 'the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have'.

Here, Falkenhayn believed, was a war-winning formula, for if the enemy were to take the bait, 'France will bleed to death – as there can be no question of a voluntary withdrawal – whether we reach our goal or not.' His chosen target was Verdun, an ancient fortress-city which now formed an eastward projecting angle in the long line of the Western Front stretching from Switzerland to the Channel ▷

The Battle of Verdun immediately became a mincing-machine, consuming hundreds of thousands of men in an apocalyptic battle of attrition.

A History of the
BRITISH ARMY
IN 25 BATTLES

THE SOMME, 1916

Right & below The First World War saw an unprecedented mobilisation of manpower and *matériel*, creating mass citizen armies for the first time in the British history. The images show a shell-filling factory and a contingent of new volunteers marching through a London park.

The British army in France by 1916 was the largest, most complicated, and most comprehensive single organisation ever evolved by the British nation.

The Battle of Verdun began on 20 February 1916. As Falkenhayn predicted, it immediately became a mincing-machine, consuming hundreds of thousands of men in an apocalyptic battle of attrition. One effect was to bring to a point of exceptional urgency the need for the British to launch a 'relieving' offensive against another part of the German line. It had been the intention all along to launch a massive Allied offensive on the Western Front in 1916, but the Germans had seized the initiative and struck first, so that now it was a matter not simply of driving the enemy off French soil, but of ensuring the very survival of the French Army in any form

Choice of battlefield

That the intention was a massive combined offensive by both British and French more or less determined that it should take place either side of the River Somme, since it was here that the British and French sectors of the line met. That it needed to happen sooner rather than later – because of the pressure on the French at Verdun – meant that the offensive opened before Haig had achieved the level of build-up and training he judged desirable

Lessons had been learnt from the failures of 1915 – about the mass of men and weight of artillery required for a successful offensive, and about the tactics necessary to cross no-man's-land and contest control of the enemy trench system – but other strategic imperatives prevented those lessons being fully applied in the summer of 1916

Nor was that the only problem. A generation of colonial cavalry officers whose experience of war up until 1914 had been commanding brigades or, at most, divisions in distant outposts of empire was now handling corps and armies of unprecedented size. During the First World War, 22% of the entire British male population served in the armed forces. By the summer of 1916, Haig had one and a half million men under his command. These were divided into five armies, each of which alone

was larger than any British army of the 18th or 19th centuries. War had become a vast logistical operation, the scale of it swelling with every passing month

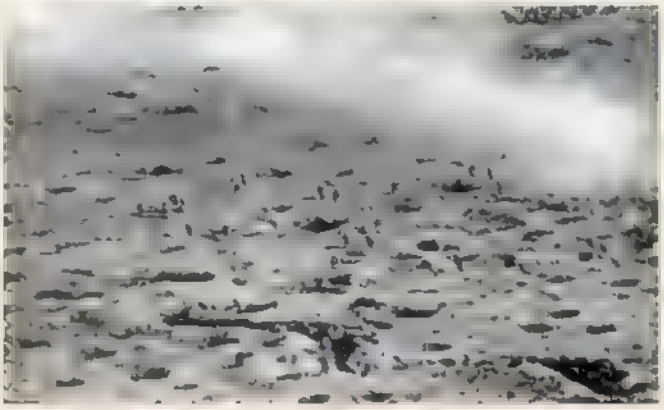
Mass warfare

Between August 1914 and November 1918, the size of the British Army as a whole increased 14-fold, that of the British Expeditionary Force in France 20-fold. In 1914 the BEF had 830 motor-cars in service; by 1918 it had 56,000 trucks. It began the war with 200 medical officers assisted by 9,000 other ranks; by the end it was employing 10,700 medical officers and 115,000 others.

Servicing the war – providing the necessary accommodation, water supplies, food, R&R facilities, sanitation, hospitals, clothing, munitions, workshops, transport, communications, storage, administration, and so on – meant the rear-areas became a sprawling network of miniature temporary towns.

The scale of activity becomes clear when the *Official History of the Great War* reports such figures as this: 'there were issued from Calais alone during the first ten months of 1915, 11,000 prismatic and magnetic compasses, 7,000 watches, 40,000 miles of electric cable, 40,000 electric torches, 3,600,000 yards of flannelette, 1,260,000 yards of rot-proof canvas, 25,000 tents, 1,600,000 waterproof sheets, 12,800 bicycles, 20,000 wheels, 6,000,000 anti-gas helmets, 4,000,000 pairs of horse and wheel shoes, 447,000 Lewis-gun magazines, 2,260,000 bars of soap...'.

'Thus,' comments Correlli Barnett, 'the British army in France by 1916 was the largest, most complicated, and most comprehensive single organisation ever evolved by the British nation.' That this was so was in part due to the static nature of the fighting front: 'Although the Second World War was to bring new technical changes and developments, the organisation of the British army in France in 1916-1918 and of its bases and communications was never to be surpassed in scale and comprehensiveness.'



GOING OVER

These three extraordinary images depict British and French infantry attacks on 1 July 1916. That many followed Rawlinson's instruction to 'push forward at a steady pace in successive lines' is clear.

Even the Boer War – which had previously been the largest ever British overseas deployment – was dwarfed by the scale of operations on the Western Front from 1916 onwards. There had been half a million British Empire troops across the whole of South Africa at the height of the Boer War; now, in the summer of 1916, as many as that were massed to fight a single great battle.

The Kitchener Volunteers

But this vast mass was commanded by men who, relative to the task, were poorly trained, lacking in experience, conservative in outlook, usually too old, and rotten with the snobbery and prejudice of the British upper classes. Unsurprisingly, they lacked a military doctrine remotely adequate to the scale and character of the war they were fighting. The army that fought the Battle of the Somme was, as military historian Tim Travers puts it, 'a commander and a force with 19th-century ideas and structure involved in 20th-century warfare'.

As for the men themselves, most of those who fought on the Somme between July and November 1916 belonged to New Army formations. Half a million had responded to Kitchener's appeal and volunteered by the end of September 1914, and the same number again by the end of February 1915 – far more than could be equipped and trained at the time. This unprecedented ▷

manpower mobilisation was both ill-conceived and mismanaged.

Kitchener was often forward-thinking and visionary. His conduct of the Sudan campaign of 1896-1898 had been a logistical masterpiece. His management of the counter-insurgency war against the Boers in South Africa in 1900-1902 had been imaginative and effective. Almost alone among leading commentators, he had grasped at the outset the likely longevity of the European war when it began in 1914, predicting that it would last three years. As early as January 1915, he was writing to Sir John French 'I suppose we must now recognise that the French Army cannot make a sufficient break through the German lines to bring about the retreat of the German forces from northern Belgium. If that is so, then the German lines in France may be looked on as a fortress that cannot be carried by assault and also cannot be completely invested.'

Despite this, Kitchener – an aloof, taciturn, Jovian presence in the wartime government – was a traditionalist at heart. He disliked the Territorials as the invention of a Liberal minister and an encouragement to amateurism. Instead, therefore, of utilising this existing military framework to accommodate the flood of volunteers from August 1914 onwards, he preferred to construct wholly new formations. Though some men were sent as replacements to Regular and Territorial battalions already in the line, most were formed into new battalions, divisions, and armies, each 100,000 men forming one in a sequence of numbered 'New Armies'.

Pals Battalions

The disadvantage is obvious: instead of rookies being teamed up with the trained and experienced cadre of established units, they were grouped together in their own battalions, representing a pooling of innocence, a disaster in the making. The counter-argument – that recruitment would be enhanced and *esprit de corps* fostered if men from the same neighbourhoods and workplaces were able to enlist, train, and serve together – could never compensate for the fact that what was needed above all was comprehensive preparation for the realities of the modern battlefield. The annihilation of the Pals Battalions on the First Day of the Somme was a tragedy conceived in August 1914.

The shocking failure of military doctrine that the British Army displayed in the Battle of the Somme therefore extended from the highest echelons of the command to the hundreds of thousands of ordinary men waiting in the trenches to go over as zero hour approached. What amplified the muddle and chaos was the contradiction between the huge scale of industrialised warfare and the increasingly atomised experience of the combat zone itself.

Haig's orders for the battle illustrate this problem: instead of simply specifying general strategic objectives and leaving officers on the ground to work out how best to achieve them, there was too much prescriptive tactical detail and too little grasp of the inevitable frictions of trench warfare. The same can be said of the orders issued by General Sir Henry Rawlinson, commander of the Fourth Army, which was to carry the main burden of the coming offensive. Because 'neither our new formations nor the old divisions have the same discipline that obtained in our army of a year ago', he complained, it would be necessary to keep the assaulting troops well in hand, thus, they were to 'push forward at a steady pace in successive lines'.

Going over

Here was the ultimate insanity: men walking upright across no-man's-land in the face of fire from modern artillery,

Below A British officer leads his men over the top at the Somme on 1 July 1916. In the opening seconds of the attack, one of his men is shot down before he can even clamber clear of the trench.

The British high command refused to decentralise command and delegate authority to the men on the ground.

Above A German infantryman at the ready in a shell-blasted defensive landscape. Along most of the British sector on the first day of the Somme, the Germans won 'the race to parapet' as the British bombardment lifted.

machine-guns, and magazine-rifles. The Old Guard generals ordered it thus because they did not trust their citizen-soldiers, because their men were only half-trained, and because the realities of the modern battlefield were less apparent to those ensconced in comfortable *châteaux* far behind the line than they were to junior officers and NCOs in the trenches.

The confident assumption was that the artillery would destroy the barbed wire, bury the German defenders in their dugouts, and then 'creep' forwards across the enemy trench system as the attack proceeded according to a preordained timetable – another comfortable assumption of those who would not be advancing across no-man's-land on the morning of 1 July; an assumption that ignored Napoleon's dictum that no plan survives first contact with the enemy.

So it was. The British fired more than five times as many shells in the preparatory seven-day bombardment before the Somme as they had before the attack at Loos the previous September; but the front was longer and too few of the guns were of sufficient weight. In consequence, in most places the attacking troops faced uncut wire, while their opponents, having sheltered in deep dugouts during the bombardment, easily won the race to the parapet when it lifted and commenced a raking fire along the ranks of Tommies coming steadily across no-man's-land.

As the disaster on the first day of the Somme unfolded – some Pals Battalions losing three-quarters of their men in ten minutes – it was compounded by an over-centralised command system dependent on primitive communications that was hopelessly at odds with the realities of trench warfare.

Combat and communications

On the vast and 'empty' expanses of the modern battlefield, commanders could not see what was happening in the front-line. Field radios did not exist, and telephone lines could not be laid quickly, and anyway were easily cut. Intelligence therefore depended on flags and flares, aircraft and tape laid on the ground, and runners trying to make their way across fire-swept ground or down a maze of clogged trenches. Consequently, it tended to be patchy, confused, and slow, and orders issued in response tended to be misconceived and too late.

There was, in short, a yawning contradiction between the pace of front-line combat and the pace of battlefield communications. Tactics had jumped ahead of communications and left senior commanders stranded like proverbial beached whales. But this contradiction was compounded by the stupidity of the British high command, which refused to recognise the problem, decentralise command, and delegate authority to the men on the ground.

Where men did succeed in getting into the German trench system, often small groups of survivors from decimated battalions, they soon found themselves sealed off by enemy forces. Yet they were unable to communicate their position and summon support. Typically, their own artillery bombardment would be disappearing into the distance as it continued forwards in its series of timetabled 'lifts', while the enemy artillery shelled the captured trenches and the ground behind them across which supplies and reinforcements would need to come.

The killing grounds

It was not unusual for the leading echelons to get into the enemy's front-line trench. Even on 1 July 1916, many did so. Most of the killing on the Western Front occurred not on the open ground of no-man's-land but inside the actual trench systems. A heavy bombardment lifting at the last minute a rush from saps and shell-holes close to the enemy wire, and often enough the assailants would be on top of their opponents before they could reach their parapets and loopholes.

But the front-line trench was a mere outpost line. Behind it was a support trench and then a reserve trench. Behind this first line, three trenches in all, was a second, also three trenches, and maybe a third, three more. So perhaps the defended zone as a whole was two or three miles in depth. And, increasingly, it was carefully engineered to comprise an intricate network of bunkers and machine-gun nests with interlocking arcs of fire.

The deeper attackers penetrated into the enemy trench system, the further they strayed from their own artillery, from reinforcements, and from their ▷

sources of resupply. Often enough, they would find themselves cut off, the ground behind them raked by enemy fire, their ability to advance further down the enemy trenches blocked by barricades manned by growing numbers of opponents.

The matter would then be decided by ferocious close-quarters fighting in confined spaces by small groups of men armed with machine-guns and trench-mortars, rifles and grenades, spades and clubs. Correlli Barnett calls it 'the paradox of modern war' that 'while it was generally an affair of great organisations, on the battlefield it was a question of small groups of men fumbling in a featureless desert of destruction'.

More than that, with the fighting dispersed and subterranean, with communications primitive and slow, and with movement across the battle-space painfully slow, whether for supporting artillery or fresh supplies of food, water, and munitions, it proved impossible to break the stalemate – impossible, that is, to carry an attack right through the enemy trench system into his rear areas.

'Breakthrough' or 'bite and hold'

This much, at least, was recognised by Rawlinson, who favoured limited 'bite and hold' operations; though not by Haig, who, in a continuing triumph of hope over experience, continued to plan 'breakthrough' battles.

The French were more realistic. South of the Somme, in contrast to the British, they surged forwards. There, some 85 heavy batteries had been pounding 8,000 yards of enemy line for eight days, largely obliterating his wire, churning his front-line trench into a series of shell-craters, and blocking the entrances to virtually all his dugouts. The French infantry, moreover, advanced in a series of 'fire-and-movement' rushes, the men racing from crater to trench to ruined wall, always covered by the weapons of stationary comrades.

By 9.45am on 1 July, the French had reached almost all of their objectives (in some cases pushing 800 yards beyond), had taken over 3,000 prisoners, and were within easy striking distance of the German second line. The British, on the other hand, had made no gains at all in their northern sector, managed only minimal advances in the centre, and even in the southern part of their front had fallen far short of achieving their objectives. They had, moreover, suffered almost 60,000 casualties, almost one in three of them fatalities, making the first day of the Somme the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army.

Yet the offensive continued, with a relentlessness as unprecedented as the carnage. While Loos had been a battle of weeks, the Somme became a battle of months. There were two more full-scale attacks, on 14 July and 15 September, but most of the battle comprised a series of smaller attacks and counterattacks to secure possession of a local terrain feature – a crest, a wood, the remains of a village.

'A necessary sacrifice'?

By the end, when winter finally forced an end to the fighting, the British had clawed their way onto the top of the low north-west to south-east ridge that dominates the battlefield of the Somme. By then, more than a million men had become casualties, perhaps 400,000 British, 200,000 French, and as many as 600,000 German.

Revisionist historians try to pretend that this was 'a necessary sacrifice' and that the Somme was 'the graveyard of the German Army'. To claim anything as monstrous as the Somme as 'necessary' is a shocking failure of historical imagination: the twisted logic of a world gone mad. Equally unconvincing is the judgement that it doomed the German Army. It might just as well have doomed the British or the French; indeed, the French Army came closer to breaking-point far sooner than the German, the mass mutinies in the spring of 1917 condemning the French high command to remain on the defensive for the remainder of that year. Attrition cuts both ways.

And nothing can exonerate the British high command of the callous stupidity with which they fought both the Battle of the Somme and, in the summer and autumn of the following year, the Third Battle of Ypres. They continued to plan for impossible breakthroughs. They continued to order pointless attacks which gained no ground and killed thousands of men. They continued to issue orders from headquarters miles behind the line, orders based on maps and hope, not on the tactical realities of a combat zone that they rarely, if ever, visited.

Above The carnage in no-man's-land along the British front on 1 July 1916 was exceptional – a testament to the callous stupidity of the high command. Though this photograph has been staged for the camera, it illustrates the confined spaces where most of the fighting took place, and the kinds of weapons deployed.

COMING NEXT

AMIENS

8 AUGUST-4 SEPTEMBER 1918

The fourth phase of the First World War saw the conflict transformed as new weapons and ways of fighting broke the trench stalemate. The British military tradition was reconfigured by a combination of armour, airpower, and modern infantry tactics of infiltration and fire-and-movement. The Battle of Amiens, which brought Imperial Germany to the brink of defeat, exemplified the new way of war.

The *Military History Monthly* History of the British Army in 25 Battles is being run in collaboration with the National Army Museum. Our special thanks are due to Alastair Massie, Head of Archives, Photographs, Film, and Sound.

Some important questions about the Battle of the Somme

- Was the Battle of the Somme a victory or a defeat for the British Army?
- Was General Sir Douglas Haig a "butcher and bungler", or was the Battle of the Somme a necessary step in the ultimate victory?
- Did General Rawlinson get his tactics wrong on 1 July 1916?
- How many British and Commonwealth Generals became casualties during the Battle of the Somme?*

* Six killed and nine wounded.

To learn more and to discuss the answers to many other questions about the Battle of the Somme and its place in the Great War:

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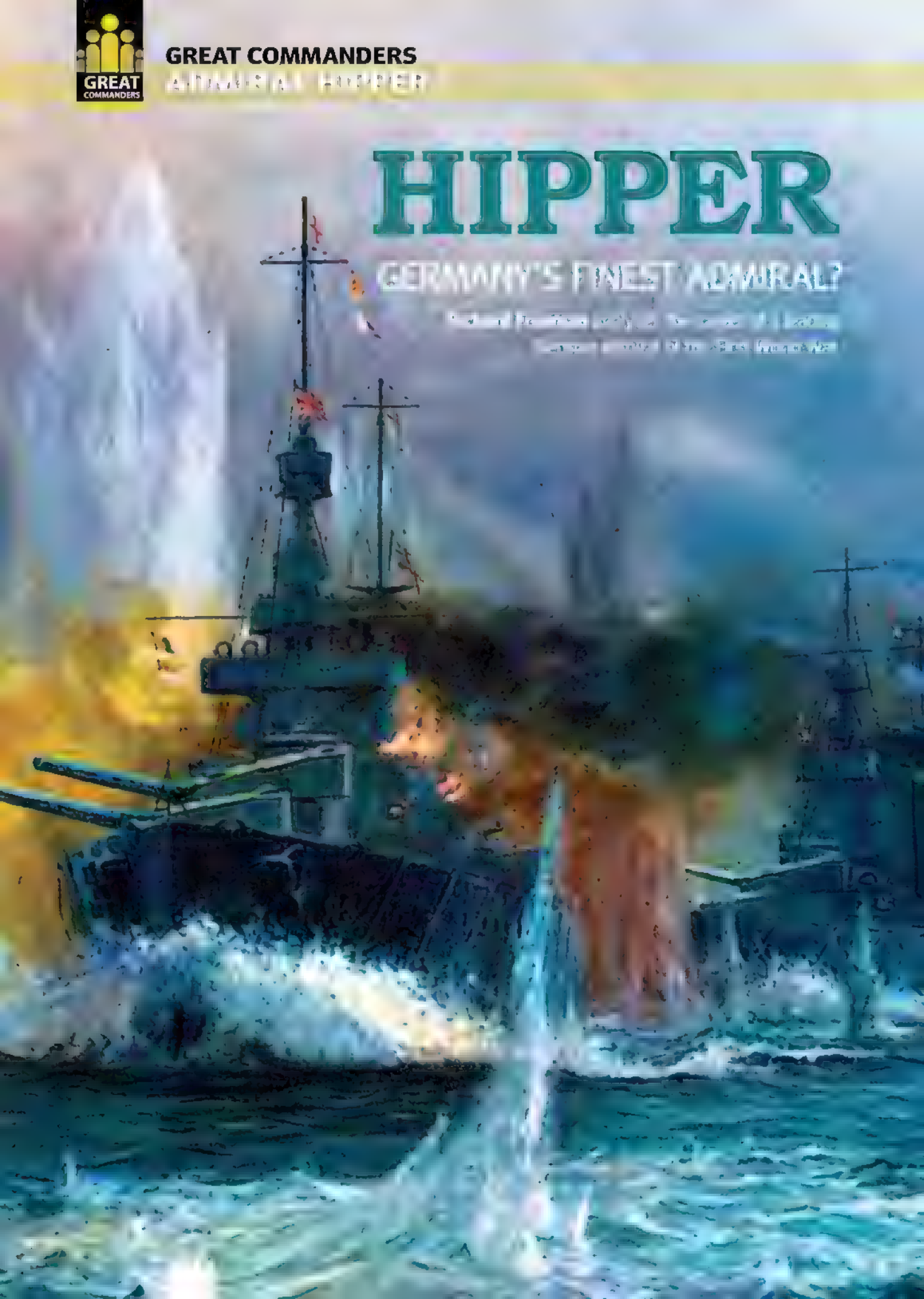
HIPPER

GERMANY'S FINEST ADMIRAL?



Vice-Admiral Franz von Hipper stood on the bridge of *Seydlitz*, puffing vigorously on his cigar He had been born for this day. His Scouting Force had first made contact with Vice-Admiral David Beatty's battlecruisers at about 2.20pm that afternoon. It was now 4.40pm and behind him lay the most exhilarating hours of his life

True to his duty, he had, for two hours, engaged Beatty's ships in a running battle, first south towards the Imperial German High Seas Fleet, then north towards the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet. Despite Beatty having 13.5-inch guns to Hipper's 11- and 12-inch ones, the German had thrashed his enemy with consummate ease

Two of Beatty's great ships – the *Indefatigable* and the *Queen Mary* – lay on the bed of the North Sea. While Hipper's ships had scored 42 hits on the British battlecruisers, Beatty's ships registered only 21 hits on the Germans. The Battle of Jutland – or Skagerrak, as the Germans were to call it – had barely begun and Hipper was already hero of the day

Left The clash of battlecruisers at Jutland. Beatty's scouting squadron was led into action by his flagship, HMS *Lion* (shown here), but the result of this first phase of the Battle of Jutland was a British defeat. The architect of that defeat was Beatty's opposite number, Vice-Admiral Franz von Hipper **[inset]**, commanding the German High Seas Fleet's Scouting Force.

Photos: © WIPL

British historians have paid little attention to the German naval commanders of the First World War. Hipper has never been the subject of an article in a learned journal, and the one English-language biography of him is very limited in coverage. Yet Hipper was an outstanding wartime admiral.

A Bavarian childhood

Franz Ritter von Hipper was born on 13 September 1863 in a remote Bavarian town. His father owned a grocery-hardware store and the family were of very modest means. Hipper senior died when Franz was only four years old, so it was left to Franz's mother, Anna, to bring up him and his three siblings

Anna, whose life was said to be 'an unending round of toil and trouble', kept the shop running until her eldest son took it over in 1879. Franz was shipped off to a Catholic boarding school at an early age. From family and school he developed the habits and beliefs of what was to be a disciplined and high-minded life. When things went well in battle, he always gave the credit to God, without whose aid, he believed, he could not have prevailed

The small town of Weilheim lies south-west of Munich, close to the Austrian border. It is doubtful whether many of its inhabitants in 1863 had ever seen the sea, so Franz's decision to join the navy was a surprise His mother was horrified, saying, 'Only adventurers and failures join the navy.' Her attempt to deter him with some Captain Marryat books backfired – reading them redoubled his enthusiasm for the sea

A dedicated professional

Hipper entered the German naval cadet school in 1881. His first prolonged experience of the sea came a year later, serving on the corvette *Leipzig* during its world cruise of 1882-1884. At the start of the voyage the young Hipper survived the worst North Sea and Channel storms for years. As the mercury fell to 732mm, the *Leipzig* heeled over and nearly capsized. Stripped of her masts, she crawled into Yarmouth in a sea strewn with the wreckage of 18 less fortunate vessels. Later she dragged her moorings and crashed into another ship. Neither the storms nor his assignment to top-gallant hand deterred the courageous Hipper from his chosen career

By 1889 he had attained the rank of lieutenant and was with the Practice Squadron in the Mediterranean. He used his command of the despatch boat *Wacht* to draw attention to himself as he tested both her and himself to the limits. A fellow officer recalled that he had a 'special gift' for speed. His return to Wilhelmshaven in December 1889 marked the last time that he was to serve outside home waters

By 1895 Hipper had obtained command of the 2nd Destroyer Division. When sent to the Baltic for a winter cruise, his officers were disappointed to find that there was to be no time for hunting. Instead Hipper filled their days with cruising and attacking exercises. Not even the foulest weather was accepted as an excuse for staying in port. At sea, Hipper shared the life of his men including the monotonous diet of soup made from bones on Monday, port chops on Tuesday, roast (vinegared) meat on Wednesdays, goulash on Thursdays, and hard-boiled eggs with salad on Fridays.

Escorting royalty

In the new century, Hipper was picked out to be the navigation officer of the royal yacht *Hohenzollern*. This was both a great honour and an opportunity to network. But networking was not in Hipper's make-up, he omitted to take chance to establish connections with the higher echelons of the navy and failed to establish any rapport with Kaiser Wilhelm II.

His period on the *Hohenzollern* coincided with the death of Queen Victoria. The ship was hastily diverted to Osborne, where Hipper saw the dead queen lying in state. Later he stood ▷

Despite Beatty having 13.5-inch guns to Hipper's 11- and 12-inch ones, the German thrashed his enemy with consummate ease.

Above The German battlecruiser *Seydlitz*, Hipper's flagship. The *Seydlitz*'s main armament was ten 11-inch guns. Beatty's *Lion* mounted eight 13.5-inch guns. Despite the latter's advantage in gun-power, however, the former proved the better ship, for it was protected by 12-inch armour as against 9-inch. Because of this difference between the British and German battlecruisers, Beatty would lose two of his ships at Jutland – *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* – and Hipper none of his, helping to prompt Beatty's famous remark later that day: 'There seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today.'

on the deck of the ship as it assisted in escorting the queen's body from the island. They passed through a double line of warships, to salutes from the guns and the sound of the dead march.

By 1908 Hipper was in command of the 1st Destroyer Division at Kiel, where his work came under the gaze of Rear-Admiral Hugo von Pohl. In an official report, Pohl declared Hipper to be 'one of the best captains we have' and recommended him for battleship command and for higher independent commands. With war approaching, Hipper became rear-admiral in 1913 and was appointed to the post which would bring him international fame: command of the Scouting Force of the High Seas Fleet.

Few men of his age and rank could match his sea experience: 25 of his 33 service years had been spent in ships and destroyers. Yet, though near to the top of the service, he had never once set foot inside the ministry, nor ever held an admiralty appointment.

Above The guns of the *Seydlitz* bombard the British coast during a German naval raid.

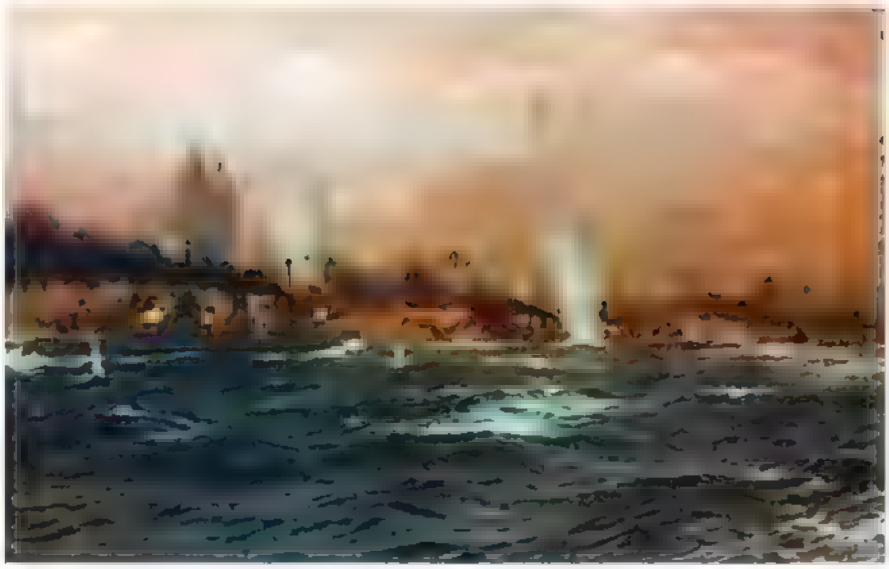
On the eve of war

At 50 years of age, Hipper, an inveterate bachelor, was more than ready for the war that he had anticipated for so many years. A fellow officer described him as 'an extraordinarily attractive, slim, wiry officer'.

On the short side and not giving the appearance of great strength, he was as tough as any hardened sailor. When on the bridge, he found perfect contentment. When at sea, he neither took off his clothes nor slept. He seemed to have little need of a social life, although he appears to have maintained loyal friendships over the years. His German biographer described him as 'essentially a spiritual hermit'. His great passion was sport, but he was mainly addicted to both smoking and the sea; riding gave him all the exercise that he felt he needed.

Hipper preferred to work alone, rarely consulting others or seeking their approval. He eschewed pomp and ceremony, always preferring a simple and unostentatious life. Although he travelled the globe in the early stages of his career, he never took to foreign parts – no place was ever able to match his beloved Bavaria. This may well explain why he never took the trouble to learn another language.

Paperwork and writing were anathema to him. His only recorded reprimand occurred very early on in his career when he failed to keep a ship's diary to the standard required. Until the war came, he never bothered to read the orders and papers sent to him, trusting his officers to handle the detail while he pursued his instinctive style of command. When dealing with men he preferred face-to-face talk: 'Slanging', he said, 'doesn't go well on paper. If it's necessary at all it should be done direct.'



Battle is joined on 31 May 1916. **[Above]** Admiral Beatty's battlecruiser squadron steam line-ahead into action. The *Queen Mary* appears in the foreground. An hour or two later, she would be on the bottom of the North Sea. **[Top]** The five battlecruisers of Admiral Hipper's scouting squadron in action during 'the run to the south' on the afternoon of the Battle of Jutland. They were slower than Beatty's ships and carried guns with inferior range, but Hipper's *Seydlitz, Moltke, Von der Tann, Derfflinger,* and *Lützow* worked better together than the British vessels, and found their range more effectively.

A defensive posture

On 30 July 1914 Hipper received orders to 'stand by' as war-fever gripped Europe. The next day Germany declared war on Russia and at 8.00pm Hipper received his full mobilisation orders. His battlecruisers – *Seydlitz* (his flagship), *Moltke*, and *Von der Tann* – were ready and waiting in the Schillig Roads. (*Derfflinger* and *Lützow* were added later.)

For many years both the British and German high commands had assumed that a war would commence with an almighty naval battle in which a good part of each fleet would be destroyed. Hipper, too, expected an initial clash. But the German High Command chose a policy of 'defence with readiness to attack'.

The British Admiralty had adopted much the same policy for its Grand Fleet, which Winston Churchill had despatched to the relative safety of Scapa Flow in the Orkneys on 29 July. With the two largest navies in the world in voluntary isolation, Hipper was at the beginning of what turned out for him to be a deeply frustrating war.

The principal role of his Scouting Force was to protect Germany's North ▷

> Not even the foulest weather was accepted as an excuse for staying in port.

Sea coast. When at full strength, he had five battlecruisers, which were supported by light cruisers, destroyers, U-boats, minesweepers, aeroplanes, and airships.

He laid out his forces in three concentric arcs, centred on the Elbe 1 lighthouse. The outermost arc at 35km radius held the destroyers. At 29km were his submarines, and, inside them, was an arc of mine-sweepers. On the wings of this protective zone, he placed a small number of light cruisers.

The U-boats and destroyers were withdrawn at night – a move that was to have serious consequences for Hipper. No disposition of forces could have more clearly underlined the defensive posture adopted by the German Navy at the start of the war. His own view in August 1914 was that 'The best and only possible course which we can take is to wait' – an uncharacteristic remark from a man who would spend the war itching for action.

Heligoland Bight

For the first 22 months of the war, that is until the Battle of Jutland, Hipper's forces kept vigil. This tedium was broken on one occasion by a British raid, and on four occasions by his participation in German raids at Dogger Bank and on the British coast.

Of these raids, the British ambush at Heligoland on 28 August 1914 was the most serious, since it forced Hipper to rethink his protection strategy. At dawn that day, as his light cruisers accompanied his destroyers to their station on the Bight, they were set upon by Commander Reginald Tyrwhitt's destroyers, sweeping from east to west right through the protective zone. To add to Hipper's woes, the seas swarmed with Captain Roger Keyes's submarines. A morning's work by the British cost Hipper three light cruisers, two torpedo boats, and one destroyer, plus over 1,000 men killed, wounded, or captured. His protection zone had failed in the first month of the war.

But Hipper was a man who learnt fast from experience. He immediately stepped up his patrols of the inner and outer Bight, and he placed four capital ships permanently outside the Jade Bar. (Ships inside the Bar could only cross it at high tide.) More importantly, he decided that minefields offered better protection than screens of destroyers and submarines.

Heligoland Bight thus brought about two monumental changes in naval warfare in the North Sea: the British proved that screens were vulnerable to surprise attack, and Hipper showed that the only response was mines.

Dogger Bank

Over the next few months Admiral Gustav von Ingenohl, Commander of the High Seas Fleet, used minor raids as bait to lure the Grand Fleet into action. Hipper took part in the raids on Yarmouth (November 1914) and Scarborough-Hartlepool (December 1914). The results were meagre. Indeed, Hipper refused to wear the Iron Cross that he was awarded after Yarmouth because he did not feel worthy of it.

Then came the disastrous raid on Dogger Bank in January 1915. Hipper had intended to search the fishing boats that lurked there, hoping to prove that they were engaged in espionage. Unknown to the Germans, the British Admiralty had broken the German naval code and so had early warning of Hipper's sorties.

> Shortly after Hipper predicted that 'something nasty is brewing', a gun turret was blown to pieces.

On his arrival at Dogger Bank, Hipper was set upon by Beatty's waiting battlecruisers. In the ensuing battle Hipper lost an armoured cruiser, suffered a severely damaged battlecruiser, and lost 1,000 men. Given the ferocity of the surprise reception, Hipper was fully justified in later saying that 'I have fought to the best of my knowledge and ability and have done all that is humanly possible despite the unfortunate result.'

Others disagreed and there were calls for his dismissal, but it was Ingenohl who went, while Hipper received the Iron Cross 1st Class.

Hipper was not in sympathy with Ingenohl's replacement, Admiral Hugo von Pohl, who was a submarine man. On 4 February 1915 Pohl announced the commencement of unrestricted U-boat warfare. Hipper, a surface-vessel man, dropped into the background. Less than a year later, von Pohl fell ill and was replaced by Admiral Reinhard Scheer. Although Scheer had called for Hipper's dismissal in January 1915, the two men were now to work well together to the very last day of the war.

Jutland

At least three senior officers had sought Hipper's dismissal since January 1915. Now, at Jutland on 31 May 1916, he was to prove how wrong they all had been: Hipper was the man of the battle.

In the first phase – the run to the south – Hipper's battlecruisers completely outfought those of Beatty. Despite having slower ships, with shorter-range guns, he put Beatty on the defensive from the opening moments of the engagement. His ships worked together better than Beatty's, and their range-finding was far superior to that of the British ships.

On the run to the north, Beatty was essentially trying to escape Hipper, but found his ships deluged by fire. But when Hipper ran into the 3rd Battle Squadron he was forced back by the rapidity and accuracy of its 15-inch guns. Beatty then succeeded in keeping Hipper out of sight of the British Grand Fleet to the north before the main battle began.

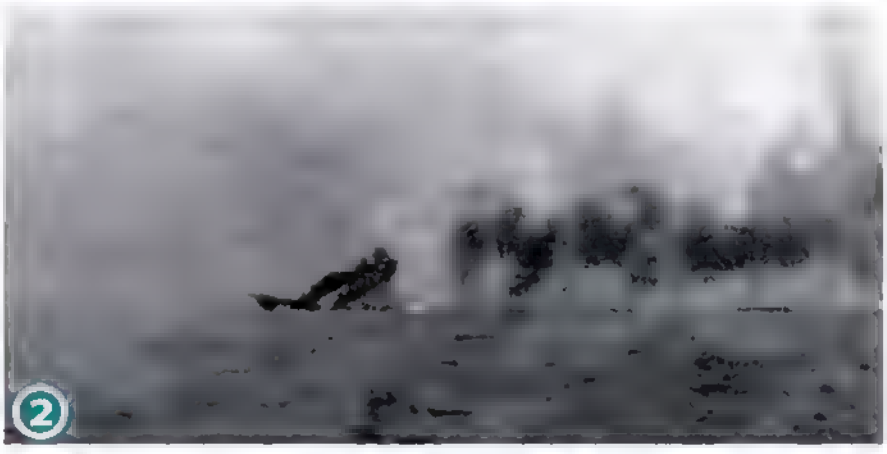
In the ensuing action, the wireless on Hipper's new flagship, the *Lützow*, was put out of action. He switched to visual signalling as the battle raged around him. Then, shortly after predicting that 'something nasty is brewing', a gun turret was blown to pieces.

A stunned Hipper was brought to his senses when his Chief of Staff told him 'We can't lead the squadron from the *Lützow* any more'. All Hipper could reply was 'But I can't leave my flagship!'

After this uncharacteristic moment of weakness, Hipper rallied. He stepped into the torpedo boat G39 and went off in search of a new flagship. In turn he went to *Seydlitz* (too badly damaged), *Van der Tann* (her guns were out of action), and *Moltke* (unable to stop). Meanwhile around him raged the famous 'Death Ride', as 40 German torpedo-boats charged into Jellicoe's fleet. Finally, Hipper was able to board the *Moltke* and resume command.

So well had Hipper trained his captains that they had continued to execute his intentions in battle, even when he was

Right (top to bottom) The HMS *Indefatigable*, her armour inadequate to withstand German shelling, sinks after blowing up when her magazines were hit [1]. Like the *Indefatigable* before her, the HMS *Queen Mary* explodes and sinks [2]. The *Seydlitz* took heavy damage and returned to port listing badly [3], but neither she nor any other of Hipper's ships was sunk.



no longer able to issue orders. The most recent assessment of his achievement that day rightly concludes that 'Hipper... could have done no more. He destroyed the bulk of his enemy's command and covered his own fleet's retreat twice'.

The Germans claimed Jutland as a great victory, despite the fact that Scheer fled the scene. Hipper shared in the glory with a Commander's Cross from King Ludwig III of Bavaria, the rank of baron, and the freedom of his hometown. He was also rewarded with his own home-ship in harbour – the *Niobe*.

Enforced inactivity

But events soon proved that Jutland was an illusory 'victory'. With the North Sea now a patchwork of minefields and the High Seas Fleet more or less confined to port by the Kaiser's orders, surface warfare had all but ceased. Hipper's great ships did no more than cover mine-sweeps and mine-laying operations. Scheer made only a few attempts to make use of his fleet. There were small-scale sweeps with Hipper in August, October, and November 1916, but nothing was found

Scheer lost interest in his surface ships and opted for a huge expansion of the U-boat fleet. Then, in February 1917, the Kaiser finally accepted the need for unrestricted U-boat warfare. (The 1915 unrestricted phase had not lasted long.) This effective admission that the building of the High Seas Fleet had been a colossal strategic failure had disastrous consequences for Hipper. Now the U-boats were to concentrate on attacking commercial shipping. The vessels that were so vital for protecting his own sorties were no longer available to him

A bitter triumph

As the war neared its end there was another change in the German High Command: Scheer was promoted to Director of Naval Operations, and Hipper stepped into the role of Commander-in-Chief. When Beatty ▷

heard the news his spirits rose. Surely the bold and dynamic Hipper would seek a great battle? But it was all too late. Hipper, who would have made a great commander-in-chief, had taken charge of a fleet that one officer described as 'a mere shadow of its former self'

On 2 October 1918 the Army High Command declared the war to be lost. A distraught Hipper wrote in desperation to Scheer: 'There must be a way out of this terrible situation.' He suggested one last sortie. He argued that 'the war should not be allowed to end without the employment of the fleet in its role as the trump card of national power'. What was needed was 'a battle for the honour of the fleet ... even if it were a death battle'. It would be 'the foundation for a new German fleet'.

Ten days later, aware that Germany was already negotiating the terms for an armistice, Hipper began to plan his great operation. He was to take the High Seas Fleet to lie off the Belgian coast, while light cruisers were to penetrate the Thames Estuary. The large ships were to seek out French and British vessels and sink them. Meanwhile mines would be laid to the north to prevent the arrival of the Grand Fleet. The High Seas Fleet itself would have a submarine screen, ready to attack any enemy vessels that approached.

Mutiny

On 30 October Hipper ordered his fleet to sea. Not a ship slipped its moorings. The naval mutiny, which had been growing for weeks, had rendered Hipper powerless. He issued his last fleet order: 'whoever abandons the struggle now... stamps himself as a coward'. The response was, said Waldeyer-Hartz, 'coarse laughter'.

Troops were called in on 3 November to arrest the mutinous sailors, but the sailors merely disarmed the soldiers. On the last day of the war, Hipper made one final effort to press his fleet to action as he read out a telegram from Scheer which declared that 'No one must quit his post without orders'.

Hipper, now alone on his harbour ship, walked to the foot of the mast and hauled down his own flag. He was offered the job of escorting the defeated High Seas Fleet to Scapa Flow, but he declined. Hipper wrote 'My heart is breaking with this, my time as a fleet commander has come to an inglorious end.'

On 30 November he signed the war diary for the last time and walked off into retirement. He never wrote one word about the war

Assessment

Hipper's German biographer tells us that his subject 'was haunted by the thought that he had occupied a high position and yet found himself helpless at the moment when the proud imperial fabric collapsed'. In this, Hipper was too hard on himself. There were many factors that had led to the naval stalemate in late 1918, not least the role of the Kaiser and the British policy of long-distance blockade. It was no fault of Hipper's that the High Seas Fleet was by then redundant.

We can be more generous and recognise the greatness in Hipper. Throughout the early part of his career he was repeatedly singled out by his superiors as a man destined for fleet command. His assiduous attention to technical detail and to the training of men, combined with his energy and daring, were seen as qualities that the navy would need in war.

When war came, as long as Hipper was permitted to act, he acted. From August 1914 to June 1916 he was the most energetic of all the German naval commanders as he vigorously sought ways to attack the Royal Navy. At Jutland, he outshone Jellicoe, Beatty, and Scheer in combining audacity with rigour.

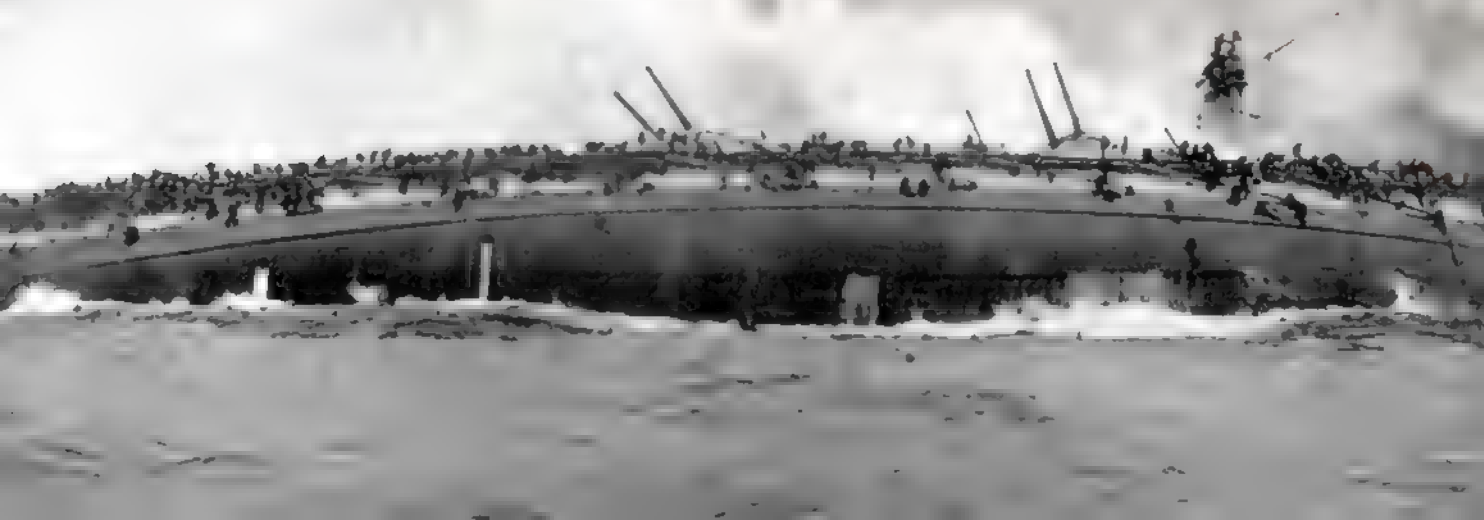
His lack of enthusiasm for submarine warfare necessarily led to his eclipse in 1917. It was his great misfortune to reach the highest command when the war was already lost. Discontent in the cities, incipient mutiny on the ships, and fatalism in the high command rendered Hipper powerless to use the force that he had inherited.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

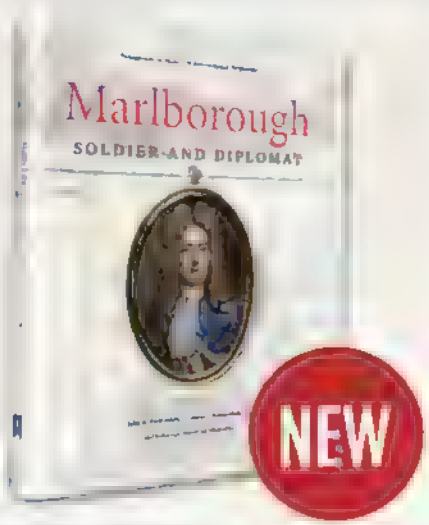
Richard Freeman is a freelance naval history writer. His recent book *Great Naval Commanders of the First World War* is published by Endeavour Press and is available on Amazon Kindle. Details of his other books can be found at *rdfreeman.net*

Further information

Two (out-of-print) biographies are T R Phibbs's *Admiral von Hipper: the inconvenient hero* (1982) and H von Waldeyer-Hartz's *Admiral Von Hipper* (1933). The only website on Hipper is an excellent Wikipedia entry.



Below The SMS *Blücher* sinks after receiving multiple hits from British warships at the Battle of Dogger Bank, 15 January 1915



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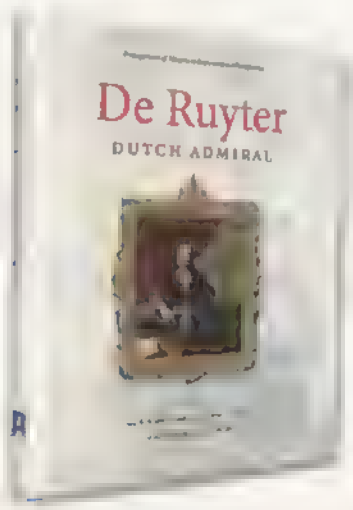

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Left Maria Dickin, who founded the PDSA and established the Dickin Medal, awarding the medal to a pigeon.

THE DICKIN MEDAL

Joe Knight looks at the life of Maria Dickin, founder of the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) in 1917, and creator of the 'animals' Victoria Cross'.

Military medals are awarded for a variety of different reasons. In America, the most prestigious of these is the Medal of Honor, in the UK, it is the Victoria Cross. But there is one medal awarded to heroes that no human can earn. This medal, the Dickin Medal, is awarded only to animals that have performed heroic deeds. To date, the Dickin Medal has been awarded to 63 animals responsible for saving countless human lives.

Since the time when animals were first used in warfare, people have understood that such animals are like soldiers – they need to be fed right, treated correctly, given proper medical care, and, as far as the animals were concerned, treated more 'humanely'. One woman understood this better than anyone.

HISTORY OF THE DICKIN MEDAL

In 1870, Maria Dickin was born in London, the eldest of eight children. In the 1890s, she opened a voice studio in central London which became a magnet for famous singers. She gave up her work after getting married, and stayed at home, entertaining high-profile guests from the political, business, and legal professions. But for Maria, an independent-minded woman of the late 19th century, leaving her work at the studio left a gap in her life.

To fill the void, Maria decided to go into social work. She attended the sick and poor of London's East End and was appalled at the poverty she discovered. It was the suffering of the animals, however, that she found most heartbreaking. She witnessed dogs and cats starving, skin raw with mange, and often limping with fractured bones. Other animals, such as goats and rabbits, huddled together in backyards, sick, injured, and ignored. Horses and donkeys belonging to fruit-, vegetable-, and coal-hawkers were often forced to work while lame, crippled, and exhausted by heavy loads.

Maria was revolted by what she witnessed. She recalled the scene in a book published in 1940: 'The suffering and misery of these poor, uncared-for creatures in our overcrowded areas was a revelation to me. I had no idea it existed, and it made me indescribably miserable.'

She decided to set up what she called the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA), to which those living in poverty could bring their sick and injured animals for free medical care. On 17 November 1917, she opened her first animal clinic in a basement. The clinic proved to be so popular that police were needed to control the crowds of people flocking for free treatment. Within just four years, the PDSA had seven clinics across London, treating some 40,000 animals a year.

Below Mary the pigeon of Exeter, recognised for five years of service carrying top-secret messages during the Second World War

GROWING SUCCESS

The demand for care grew so great that Maria soon had to find a larger site. At a time when women were not allowed entry into the Royal Veterinary College, she recruited and trained her own staff and established the modern-day PDSA.

Within six years she had built and outfitted her first horse-drawn mobile animal clinic. Before long she had a fleet of mobile animal dispensaries, which were common sights across the country, providing treatment to animals and comfort to their owners. PDSA clinics soon numbered 17, treating 150,000 animals a year. Not content with this, Maria extended her work to other countries: France, Romania, Morocco, Egypt, Greece, and Palestine.

During the Second World War Blitz, PDSA rescue squads saved over 250,000 pets buried and injured by the bombings. In January 1943, the PDSA set up the Allied Forces Mascot Club for animals that provided

morale-boosting friendship for military personnel fighting in the war.

It was at this point that the idea of honouring the courage and devotion of animals fighting alongside British forces was conceived. In 1943 Maria established the Dickin Medal to recognise animals that had shown outstanding bravery while serving in or associated with any branch of the Armed Forces or Civil Defence. It became known as the animals' VC.

The medal, which can only be considered on receipt of an official commendation, was awarded 54 times between 1943 and 1949. The recipients comprised 32 pigeons, 18 dogs, three horses, and one cat. The award itself is a bronze medal with the words 'For Gallantry' and 'We Also Serve' adorned inside a laurel wreath.

ANIMAL HEROES

The first animal awarded the Dickin Medal was a pigeon named White Vision. On 11 October 1943, White Vision was aboard a Catalina flying-boat when it was forced to ditch in the North Sea off the coast of Scotland. The aeroplane's radio was not working, so White Vision was released with a message specifying where the plane had gone down.

Above A new type of animal ambulance: essentially a big cabinet fitted on the back of any motor car, it could be used in all emergencies. Designed by Mr Paddle of Isleworth, it was presented to the National Air Raid Precautions Animals Committee in 1943. Maria Dickin's compassion was catching on.

> Recipients of the Dickin Medal between 1943 and 1949 comprised 32 pigeons, 18 dogs, three horses, and one cat.

White Vision flew 60 miles against a strong headwind and returned to her roost. The message she carried was read and the search resumed. The Catalina was found, and all 11 members of the crew were rescued despite having spent 18 hours in rough seas. White Vision was awarded the Dickin Medal on 2 December 1943. Her citation read: 'For delivering a message under exceptionally difficult conditions and so contributing to the rescue of an air crew while serving with the RAF in October 1943.'

The first dog to be awarded the Dickin Medal was Bob, a mongrel attached to an infantry unit in Africa in 1944. Bob was travelling with his unit when he froze suddenly and refused to move. A noise was then heard which revealed the presence of the enemy. Because of Bob's actions, none of the men of his unit were killed or captured. Bob's citation reads: 'For constant devotion to duty with special mention of patrol work at Green Hill, North Africa, while serving with the 6th Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.'

Olga, a police horse, was one of the three horses awarded the Dickin Medal in that period. She was on duty in south London when a German flying-bomb destroyed nearby houses. Olga's award read: 'On duty when a flying-bomb demolished four houses in Tooting and a plate-glass window crashed immediately in front of her. Olga, after bolting for 100 yards, returned to the scene of the incident and remained on duty with her rider, controlling traffic and assisting rescue organisations.' ▷

DICKIN MEDAL TODAY

Several Dickin Medals have been awarded in the 21st century. Among those honoured were: Salty and Roselle, labrador guide dogs who led their blind owners down 70 floors during the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001; Buster, a springer spaniel who, while on duty in southern Iraq, discovered a cache of explosives hidden behind a false wall; and, most recently, Treo, a labrador assigned to the 8th Platoon, The Royal Irish Regiment in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, who discovered a set of IEDs wired together and set to explode at the same time. Treo's actions saved the lives of many military and civilian personnel.

Below Simon the cat aboard HMS *Amethyst*, where he kept giant rats in check.

SIMON THE CAT

Only one cat, Simon, earned the Dickin Medal. In 1948, HMS *Amethyst* entered Stonecutter's Island in the port of Hong Kong for supplies. In the hot and humid climate of the area, rats were a threat to ships' food supplies and the health of crews. Simon was snuck aboard the *Amethyst* and was put to work catching rats. In April 1949, *Amethyst* was ordered to steam up the Yangtze River and relieve HMS *Consort*, which was guarding the British Embassy.

Amethyst got less than 100 miles upriver before she started receiving fire from Communist shore batteries. The ship was hit and ran aground, leaving 25 crew members, including the captain, dead or dying. Simon the cat was hit with flying debris and knocked unconscious. Eventually the senior officer got *Amethyst* refloated and steamed away from the shore batteries. Simon, who was injured, dehydrated, and had had his whiskers and eyebrows burned away, was taken to the ship's medical officer who provided what treatment he could. Simon then found a corner, curled up, and slept.

In his absence, rats became a serious problem aboard the ship. After several days, the cat, still in obvious pain, started to go on the prowl again. Simon caught at least one rat a day. He would also visit the injured sailors who were recovering in sick bay: they allowed Simon to sit on their bunks, where he would rub up against them and purr. His actions helped the young injured sailors deal with their trauma.

In the meantime, there was a particularly large and ferocious rat on board that the crew nicknamed Mao Tse Tung. Mao and his followers were wreaking havoc on the ship's dwindling supplies. The crew felt that Simon in his weakened state would be no match in a one-on-one with Mao. One day, however, Simon and Mao did come face to face. Simon attacked first and killed the rat. The crew was so impressed they promoted Simon to Able Seacat Simon.

In 1949 the captain of the *Amethyst* wrote a citation and Simon was awarded the Dickin Medal. In November that year, Simon died of a viral infection and was buried in the PDSA Pet Cemetery with full naval honours, his coffin draped with the Union Jack.

Before 2000, the last award of a Dickin Medal had been in 1949. The award was then revived, however, to honour posthumously one Gander, a Newfoundland dog. His award reads: 'For saving the lives of Canadian infantrymen during the Battle of Lye Mun on Hong Kong Island in December 1941.'

On three documented occasions, Gander, the mascot of the Royal Rifles of Canada, engaged the enemy as his regiment joined the Winnipeg Grenadiers, members of Battalion Headquarters 'C' Force, and other Commonwealth troops in their defence of the island. Twice Gander's attacks halted the enemy's advance and protected groups of wounded soldiers. In a final act of bravery, the war dog was killed in action gathering a grenade. Without Gander's intervention many more lives would have been lost in the assault.

Books

Peter Hawthorne
The Animal Victoria Cross: the Dickin Medal
(Pen & Sword, £16.99)

Below Rob the dog left his life on a farm in Ellesmere, Shropshire, to become a distinguished 'Para-dog' during the Second World War.

Further information

The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals is still active today, caring for sick and injured animals, educating the public on the proper treatment of their pets, and offering pet insurance.

For more details, see *www.pdsa.org.uk*

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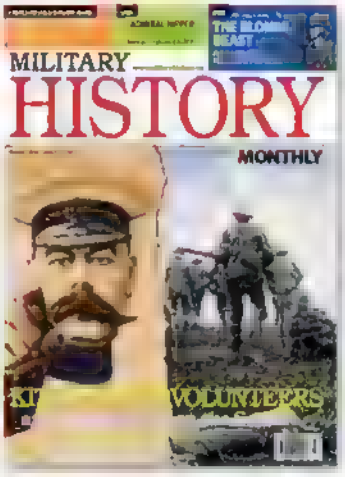

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The Road to Dien Bien Phu

HOW THE VIETNAMESE BUILT A GUERRILLA ARMY

In 1946 the Vietnamese began a long struggle for national independence. By 1954 they had beaten the French. By 1975 they had also beaten the Americans. Peter Neville analyses how Vietnam's popular army was forged.

It was 5pm on 7 May 1954 in the French command post at Dien Bien Phu, the 'arena of the gods' as the local Vietnamese called it. The end was near.

Fifty-five days earlier, the Viet Minh forces had launched their first massive attack on the garrison. The French plan had been to draw the Viet Minh forces into a set-piece battle. It had not worked. The French had been surrounded by the Viet Minh, and then, one by one, their strong points had fallen.

Now Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Langlois and his colleagues heard the Viet Minh all around them. Something rolled over the roof above. It sounded like a grenade. There was no explosion. Instead, a Viet Minh soldier in a cork helmet came down the stairs from the outside. It was the moment of surrender as the soldier ordered the officers to 'Get out!'

In those 55 days, the French had lost 3,000 men to the Viet Minh's 8,000. Yet it was France, with all its modern high-tech military hardware, that was defeated at Dien Bien Phu – a reverse that ended French colonial rule in Indochina. Dien Bien Phu marked the end of a bloody

Photos: © Alamy Images

Left French Foreign Legionnaires with a Viet Minh captive. The soldiers interrogated the guerrilla after he was found hiding in the jungle.

eight-year struggle between the forces of Vo Nguyen Giap and the French.

The origins of the Viet Minh

The formal struggle between the Viet Minh and the French started in December 1946. But the origins of the Viet Minh nationalist movement went back much earlier. On 19 May 1941, Giap and his political leader Ho Chi Minh ('He Who Enlightens') had formed anti-French Vietnamese communists into the Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh. The English translation is 'the League for the Independence of Vietnam' – or Viet Minh for short.

Ho and Giap had been anti-imperialist political activists for many years. The Indochinese Communist Party (ICC) had been formed in 1937. It was not called the 'Vietnamese Communist Party' because the aim was to form a common front with activists in the neighbouring French colonies of Laos and Cambodia.

One of the strangest things about the history of the Viet Minh is that, in its early days, it was trained by the American OSS. The OSS officer Archimedes Patti organised the so-called 'Deer Team', which was parachuted into the North Vietnamese province of Tonkin on 16 July 1945. It was ordered to co-operate with Giap, who impressed Patti as an able tactician.

Patti's force, just 50 strong, trained the Viet Minh and provided them with modern weapons. These included machine-guns, Browning automatic rifles, and hand grenades sent in by parachute. Patti wrote later of how 'Giap attacked several Japanese outposts with our ▷

Above During the August Revolution, 100,000 people demonstrated, calling for Bao Dai (pictured centre), the client ruler of Vietnam under the Japanese, to stand down.

Left Ho Chi Minh, which means 'He Who Enlightens', was a Vietnamese patriot, communist, and anti-colonialist revolutionary.

men'. The Americans appear in archive film-footage showing Giap's men how to throw grenades.

Doubts remain, however, about the overall level of Viet Minh/OSS co-operation – these were small-scale operations. But they do indicate how the United States – Ho and Giap's greatest long-term enemy – started as the apparent friend of the Vietnamese Communists.

The defeat of Japan and the August Revolution

While Patti and his men trained the Viet Minh, events were moving quickly elsewhere, with Imperial Japan going down to defeat. Between 17 July and 2 August, the Allied powers were determining the shape of the post-war world at Potsdam. They decided that once Japan was defeated, Vietnam would be divided at the 16th Parallel. North of the line, the forces of the Chinese dictator Chiang Kai-Shek would be the occupying power. South of it, in what the French called Cochin China, the British would provide the occupation force.

Japan duly surrendered on 2 September 1945, soon after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. South East Asia Command (SEAC), headed by Lord Louis Mountbatten, allocated the Vietnam occupation duties to General Douglas Gracey's 20th Division. It was made up almost entirely of Gurkhas and Indian troops. Gracey, a veteran of the Burma campaign against the Japanese, had a good reputation and was popular with his men.

The first elements of Gracey's division would not arrive in South Vietnam until 13 September. Before that, crucial events had taken place in Hanoi, the capital of Tonkin – events known to the Vietnamese as 'the August Revolution'.

The client ruler of Vietnam under Japanese occupation had been the Nguyen emperor Bao Dai. On 23 August 1945, a huge demonstration of 100,000 people in the imperial city of Huế demanded that he stand down. An Act of Abdication was duly handed to the delegates sent to Huế by Ho Chi Minh's new provisional government on 29 August. The following day, the fallen emperor read out the declaration at the Zenith Gate in the city.

Vietnam's declaration of independence

The transfer of power was formalised on 2 September, when Ho made a declaration of independence in Hanoi. Archimedes Patti and his OSS colleagues listened as Ho quoted from the US Declaration of Independence and from the French Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man. Ho went on to appeal for recognition from President Truman. This appeal was ignored. Giap, the new Minister of the Interior, spoke after Ho.

In the crowd were many *colons* (French settlers) and some 5,000 former French prisoners of the Japanese. Both groups were armed and hostile to Ho's government. But there was, as yet, no violence.

A similar ceremony took place in the southern capital Saigon on 23 August. A Provisional Executive Committee was set up for Nam Bo, as the south was called, under Tran Van Giau. Its supporters included Viet Minh Communists but also other nationalists. They seized the town hall. On 2 September, in Saigon, a great crowd listened to Ho Chi Minh's speech being relayed from Hanoi.

The difference here was that tensions between the Vietnamese and the local French *colon* population were much sharper. Shots rang out from the Catholic cathedral and a number of people were killed and wounded (it is impossible to fix exact responsibility). Groups of Viet Minh supporters then attacked *colons* in their homes or on the street. An additional complication was the involvement of the supporters of religious sects like the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao.

Restoring imperial rule

All of this happened ten days before Douglas Gracey's forces started to arrive. When they did so, Gracey refused to recognise the authority of the Southern Committee. His brief, he believed, was

to facilitate the restoration of French colonial rule. His problem was that there were so few British and French on the ground that he had to rely on Japanese prisoners-of-war to play a policing role (something which outraged the Americans when they heard about it).

In the North, Giap had a different problem. As commander-in-chief of Viet Minh Forces, he had to watch impotently as Chinese troops, part of a huge 200,000 man contingent, poured into Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh, however, was sanguine. He told a colleague, 'It is better to smell France's dung than China's all our lives.' The Vietnamese remembered their 1,000-year occupation by China, and Ho knew that the Potsdam powers would force China to leave. And he was confident that France, the controlling authority only since the 1860s, could be defeated by the Viet Minh.

At that moment, though, Ho and Giap's priority was to support their colleagues in the South, where a guerrilla campaign against British and French imperialism erupted in the winter of 1945-1946. Few Tonkinese volunteers could be spared for the South, however, and only in January 1946 could Giap leave the North to visit. By then, French troops were being sent to Vietnam in increasing numbers. These soon replaced the British, who withdrew from Vietnam in March 1946 having suffered 40 casualties.

Briefly, that March, it seemed possible that an agreement might be made which would allow Vietnam independence inside the French Union (the equivalent of the British Commonwealth). It proved to be an illusion. There was a serious dispute between the Viet Minh and the French in the northern part of Haiphong in November, leading to a major confrontation in Hanoi in December.

Above A Viet Minh trench typical of the conflict.

The war begins

The Viet Minh erected barricades in the Vietnamese quarters of the city and ignored French demands that they be taken down. On 19 December, all the electricity supplies in Hanoi were cut off as a prelude to a Viet Minh attack. The French returned fire. Their representative, Jean Sainteny, one of the very few Frenchmen trusted by Ho, was seriously wounded when his armoured car was blown up by a Viet Minh mine.

Ho Chi Minh himself told an aide, 'Get ready to go. This evening we're taking a journey.' It was a journey which did not really end until Giap's tanks battered down the gates of the presidential palace in Saigon in April 1975.

On 17 February 1947, the resistance of Giap's forces inside Hanoi ended. The Viet Minh retreated into the countryside. A 30-year rural insurgency had begun.

In the countryside around Hanoi, the Viet Minh remained dominant, while the French had seized control of the big towns in Tonkin and northern Annam. The Viet Minh were weaker in Cochin China, where the French held Saigon. But the same tactics were used in either case. Tunnels were dug from which the Viet Minh would emerge to attack unwary French patrols. Snake stakes and punji stakes were used to booby-trap unwary soldiers.

Giap and his men were safe in their old base in the Viet Bac, the so-called 'Greenhouse', where their movements could be covered in the fog and mist of the wet season. It lasted from May to November, during which time 80 inches of rain fell, making it virtually impossible for the French to mount ▷

French paratroopers, concentrated artillery fire, and the introduction of the new chemical weapon napalm combined to defeat Giap's three ambitious attacks in 1951.

military operations. They had the greater firepower but faced an elusive foe.

An embedded people's army

The war was deeply political. Giap's memoirs reveal that intensive reorganisation of the nationalist movement had begun at the end of 1945, as French troops were starting to reappear in the North.

The Viet Minh movement was a broad-based one comprising soldiers, peasants, workers, youth, and women. It even included intellectuals and artists, groups often regarded as suspect by Communists. One Viet Minh leader, Ho Van Lau, said later, 'The Viet Minh were like fish in water. That was our slogan. Our fighters moved and worked among the people like fish in water.' It was Giap who bolted on the self-defence units, which could be found in every village, street, and factory in the North. Some places had two companies of fighters, others a platoon.

Years of exile and hiding served the Viet Minh well. Their leaders had constantly shuttled between North Vietnam and China, where Mao Zedong's Communist Party was sympathetic. Their bases and hideaways soon stretched all the way from the border town of Langson (where the Japanese had massacred the French colonial garrison in 1940) westwards to the Truong Son (Long Mountains). Using these bases, the Viet Minh came out, attacked the French, and then disappeared again into the Truong Son. The mountains stretched for hundreds of miles, creating a sort of invisible front-line. The Americans later came to know the Truong Son as 'the Ho Chi Minh Trail'.

Giap and the Viet Minh extended their war in modest ways. In 1949, they made attacks on isolated French outposts along the Chinese border. These were unsuccessful, but they deceived the French into thinking that they had the measure of the Viet Minh, whereas Giap's main preoccupation had been to give his men combat experience irrespective of the outcome of any particular operation.

For their part, the French used the loyalty of the million-strong Tonkinese Catholic population to secure control of the Red River Delta, a vital rice-growing area around Hanoi. Giap, on the other hand, could expect assistance from the new Communist regime in China, though he would not allow units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to fight in Vietnam. To have done so would have undermined the Viet Minh's nationalist credentials.

Above The French bombard the Viet Minh with their superior firepower. But the enemy they faced was elusive and hard to pin down.

A new strategy

There was a change in Viet Minh strategy for 1950. Years of training and consolidation meant that Giap now had a regular army that could operate at brigade level. Viet Minh units attacked the French in the area between Cao Bang in the Viet Bac and the frontier town of Langson along Colonial Route 4. They won a considerable victory. Isolated French garrisons were destroyed or forced to abandon their outposts. The French lost 6,000 men and many tanks and mortars. It was probably France's greatest colonial defeat in history to that point. ▷

GO EXPLORE

Vietnam: Lost Films

This documentary captures the sights, the sounds, and the stories of the Vietnam War, using intimate and revealing interviews with 13 people who experienced the war first-hand. The DVD is available from *www.amazon.co.uk* for £14.39.

Snake stakes and punji stakes were used to booby-trap unwary soldiers.

The results were important. Giap now controlled access to the border with China, and his sappers could link the Vietnamese system of dirt roads from the Viet Bac to those of the southern Chinese provinces.

Perhaps the 1950 victory caused Giap to become overconfident. In 1951, he was bold enough to take on the French in set-piece battles in the flatlands of the Red River Delta. This proved to be a serious error as it allowed the French to use their superior artillery and air-power.

The Viet Minh were by now organised at divisional level, and on 13 January 1951 elements of their 308th Division attacked near Vinh Yen. The next day the 312th Division also advanced. The offensive was a disaster. Giap had been influenced by Chinese advisers into using 'human wave' tactics of the kind the People's Liberation Army had been employing in Korea.

Giap matched his hero Napoleon in his ruthlessness. The French were amazed by the reckless courage of the Viet Minh, and the result was that the Viet Minh suffered heavy casualties from concentrated artillery fire. The French also had a new weapon: napalm, supplied by the Americans, was used to deadly effect. The Viet Minh lost 6,000 men and were forced to retreat.

Giap in defeat

Giap adhered obstinately to his new tactics. On 23 March, he tried to break through the French defences on the east side of the Delta. Three infantry divisions were supposed to drive towards the vital part of Haiphong, the so-called 'lungs of Tonkin'. They advanced 15 miles. But the French used naval gunboats to shell them from inland waterways, in addition to deploying their air-power again. Repulsed at the town of Mao Khe, the Viet Minh lost another 3,000 men.

A third unsuccessful attack was launched on 29 May. This time the 304th and 308th Divisions were ordered to attack across the Day River assisted by two regiments already infiltrated into the area. Giap had demonstrated his superb logistical skills – so evident at Dien Bien Phu three years later – by moving two divisions 150 miles without their being detected by the French. Unfortunately, the outcome was the same.

Napalm again proved to be lethal in open country, and the French used paratroopers and mobile armoured groups to smash the offensive. The battle lasted ten days. This time the Viet Minh losses were 10,000 dead.

Above Despite the losses Giap's forces suffered, the lessons he learnt earned him victory at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. This propaganda poster from the war shows Ho Chi Minh overseeing a victorious Viet Minh army.

It would be years before Giap took on the French again in a set-piece battle, and then only in the most favourable conditions. He was humiliated in 1951, having aroused Ho Chi Minh's anger, and had to write a self-criticism for the party. Years later he would admit that these three offensives had been premature.

Lessons learned

In 1952, Giap won a victory at Hoa Binh that forced the French to evacuate their positions on the Red River. He still lost 9,000 men, but – like Napoleon – he remained largely indifferent to high casualty rates. Technically, of course, the Viet Minh were inferior to their opponents and invariably took far heavier losses, but they had the crucial advantage that they were able to draw on a vast pool of manpower.

The French had 230,000 men in their Expeditionary Force, but of these only 90,000 were regular French soldiers. The French Foreign Legion (some of whom were former SS men) made up a further 40,000 of the force, some 50,000 came from French Africa, and another 50,000 were Vietnamese colonial troops or levies from the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects. Many of these were no match for Viet Minh fighters motivated by 'revolutionary spirit'.

The tide really began to turn against the French late in 1952. On 11 October, Giap ordered three divisions into action north of the Red River in Tonkin. This offensive ground to a halt, but the superiority of the Viet Minh showed up in other ways. Giap told a visiting American that while the peasants would carry supplies willingly for the Viet Minh, when they were conscripted to do so by the French they had to be guarded lest they abscond, draining the enemy's military strength in policing duties.

By the end of 1952, outside the big cities of Hanoi and Saigon, the French had control only over the areas around Tourane (Da Nang) and Hué. Giap left alone some small border areas near China which could be supplied only by parachute. This was a deliberate tactic to waste French time and resources, and to lure the colonial enemy into efforts to maintain distant forward bases. Giap was positioning the Viet Minh for a decisive struggle.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Peter Neville is the author of *Britain in Vietnam: Prelude to Disaster 1945-47* (Military History and Policy series, Routledge, 2008), and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

THE VIET MINH GUERRILLA

MHM analyses the context, equipment, and tactics of key fighters through the ages.

In its early days, the Viet Minh operated at a very basic level. In 1942-1943, they functioned as an anti-French movement deep in the forests of the northern province of Tonkin. Their weaponry was crude: at the start, just daggers, spears, and old flintlocks.

The leadership realised that this weakness had to be addressed. Old pots and pans were made into primitive landmines by blacksmiths brought into Viet Minh hiding-places. Mines were a cheaply made and very effective guerrilla weapon. The emphasis, though, was on politics. The Viet Minh leader Ho Chi Minh said, 'People first, guns later.' This meant that Viet Minh fighters had to be propagandists as well as soldiers.

White terror

The Viet Minh had first to deal with a ruthless French effort to crush their movement in 1942-1945. Everyone suffered from what the Viet Minh called 'the White Terror'. The Viet Minh military leader Vo Nguyen Giap lost his wife in a French prison, and his sister-in-law was guillotined. A Viet Minh supporter could be shot by the French for trying to take a few grains of rice to the guerrillas in their jungle hideouts.

The French threat was dealt with by creating an organisation based on cells. Each Viet Minh member belonged to a cell, but the cell members knew no-one outside their own cells. A designated meeting-place in a hut or cave was where captured arms or food supplies could be brought.

The military capabilities of the movement had to evolve quickly when a full-scale war broke out with the French in December 1946, after Japan had been defeated. The Japanese had allowed a puppet Vichy regime to exist between 1940 and 1945.

Military organisation

Vietnamese resistance began at village level (*xa*), where a platoon, perhaps a dozen men with a rifle or two, might use machetes to kill local police (almost certainly Vietnamese themselves). At a slightly higher level, a group of villages might form a 50-strong militia with a light machine-gun. The larger groups might ambush trucks or French patrols, though this would be unusual.

More professional were the Viet Minh regional troops, who were full-time soldiers operating in areas disputed with the French. They had mobile battalions, which ranged around outside their village areas. Using a mixture of captured Japanese, French, U.S. and even British weaponry, there were 52 regional battalions by the time the Viet Minh launched their decisive offensive against the French at Dien Bien Phu in March 1954.

In the vast area of paddy fields in the Red River Delta around Hanoi, the regional troops could eventually bring up mortars, 57mm recoilless guns, and machine-guns to attack isolated French blockhouses. These night attacks were a terrifying experience for native colonial troops, well portrayed in the 2002 Michael Caine version of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. The Viet Minh would mine the approach roads.

> One fighter hurled himself under a slipping 105mm gun as a human wedge.

Above Viet Minh troops on a victory parade in Hanoi, 1954.

Regulars

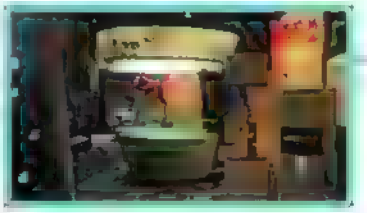
In addition to the local militia and the regional troops, when the Franco-Viet Minh war started in 1946, a regular Viet Minh army of some 30,000 troops (the Chu Teh) already existed. By 1953, this force had risen to 125,000 regulars, and their heavy battalions had heavy mortars, 75mm guns, and bazookas.

They could be sent to China for training and they were given captured U.S. weapons (from Korea). These men were ferocious warriors who wore a motley collection of French, Chinese, and US uniforms. Individuals were even known to wear fedoras instead of bush hats. Before French and Chinese uniforms became available, on the other hand, the regulars wore *cao ao* or 'pyjamas'.

The regulars' dedication to the revolutionary cause amazed the French. A fighter like Vinh Dien would hurl himself under a slipping 105mm gun on its way to Dien Bien Phu as a human wedge.

MUSEUM GUIDE

There are hundreds of military museums and heritage sites throughout Europe specialising in different eras, armies, and wars. With some opening new exhibitions and others having recently revamped their existing ones, there are plenty of places to visit to further your interest in military history. We have selected six of the best museums and heritage sites to visit this year.



Museum of the Great War

Opened in November 2011, the Museum of the Great War at Meaux is an architecturally outstanding museum that houses one of the most comprehensive and varied collections of military uniforms, individual weapons, pieces of artillery, and everyday objects from WWI. There are over 50,000 artefacts, based on the private collection of WWI expert Jean-Pierre Verney. It is close both to Paris and to the fields of the First and Second Battles of the Marne, where the British fought alongside the French. From the reasons behind the war and the lives of the ordinary people who lived through it to the arrival of American forces in 1917, the museum tells the complete story of the First World War.

The exhibits reflect the idea that the 20th century began with WWI. This novel approach makes the museum's collection a witness to the period's global social, technological, military, and geopolitical upheavals in a way that helps us to understand our contemporary history.

OPENING TIMES *May-Sept* 9.30am-6.30pm Mon, Wed-Sun. *Oct-Apr* 10am-5.30pm Mon, Wed-Sun.
WHERE? Rue Lazare Ponticelli, 77100 Meaux, France
www.museedelagrandeguerre.eu

In Flanders Fields

The In Flanders Fields Museum gives an account of the First World War on the West Flemish front. It covers the invasion of Belgium, the war of movement that unfolded in the opening months, and the subsequent four years of trench warfare.

Visitors can now follow a personalised route through the collections that is much richer than in the first version of the museum. You can expect to become acquainted with the war experiences of soldiers on both sides of the war, and from many different countries. After their visit to the museum, visitors are also encouraged to explore the WWI sites, cemeteries, and monuments spread over the landscape today.

That present-day landscape is another hallmark of the museum which uses more than 21,000 aerial photos from the war to show the traces of conflict that are still present in the landscape. Panoramas and hundreds of ground photos help establish a link between the present-day and events that occurred almost a century ago.

Objects usually considered 'worthy of a museum' are not the only ones exhibited: soil-finds holding valuable information about the WWI landscapes are also shown, often in conjunction with other artefacts.

OPENING TIMES *1 Apr-15 Nov* 10am-6pm daily. *16 Nov-31 Mar* 10am-5pm Tue-Sun.
WHERE? Grote Markt 34, B-8900 Ieper, Belgium
www.inflandersfields.be

Museum of Army Flying

The Museum of Army Flying is home to a unique collection of aviation history of national and international importance. Explore over 35 incredible historic aircraft from WWI to the present day.

Inside the museum, a world of hidden treasures is waiting to be explored. You can delve into the rich history, heroic feats, and personal stories of extraordinary aviators, or get to grips with the hi-tech world of attack helicopters.

Providing the perfect place for the community to meet, discuss, learn, and enjoy, we welcome a wide range of groups and organisations every year.

The unique setting of the museum lends itself to all manner of events, corporate, trade, public, or private, either indoors or outside on our grass area.

The museum offers everyone an experience that is educational as well as enjoyable. We provide knowledge about and understanding of events, people, and changes in the past. For schools, Cubs, Scouts, and cadets the museum provides bespoke and unique learning programmes outside the classroom (email *education@flying-museum.org.uk* for more information).

We also host an exciting range of events throughout the year, from family fun days to specialist lecture series.

OPENING TIMES 10am-4.30pm daily
WHERE? Middle Wallop, Stockbridge, Hampshire SO20 8DY
www.armyflying.com

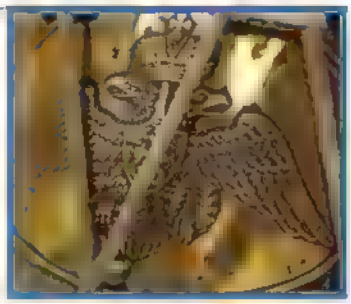
Royal Marines Museum

The Royal Marines Museum is situated in the former Officers Mess of Eastney Barracks on the seafront at Southsea, Portsmouth. The museum celebrates – with a series of interactive displays – the history of the Royal Marines from their origins in 1664 as Sea Soldiers, through to their roles at Trafalgar and in China, the Falklands and the Gulf.

The museum's extensive collection displays items gathered from around the world and features a collection of over 8,000 medals, including ten Victoria Crosses. A visit to the Royal Marines Museum allows you to discover the stories behind the élite fighting force, from entering as a raw recruit until the day they Pass-Out as a Royal Marine and are awarded their green beret. The museum features an extensive events calendar and regular special exhibitions for all visitors to enjoy. A memorial ground sits inside the beautiful grounds, where there is also a gift shop and an award-winning cafe the Quartermaster's Kitchen.

The museum is an ideal venue for individual and group visits, offering free coach-parking, group-catering, full disabled access, hearing loops, and highly trained staff to assist visitors. As a Quality Assured Visitor Attraction, steeped in history and heroism, the Royal Marines Museum is not to be missed.

OPENING TIMES 10am-5pm daily.
WHERE? Eastney Esplanade, Southsea, Hampshire PO4 9PX
www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk



Green Howards Museum

This famous North Yorkshire infantry regiment's museum has over 45,000 objects, displayed over three floors and charting the many campaigns that the Regiment has been involved in from their foundation in 1688 to the present.

The museum is renowned for its uniform collection, which includes examples from the 1780s, a private's uniform from the Crimea, and a chronological display enabling changes in uniform to be studied. There's also a fantastic medal room, with over 5,000 medals on display, including 18 Victoria Crosses and three George Crosses.

Anyone with a passion for military history will find a warm welcome, and have an enjoyable and absorbing visit.

OPENING TIMES *7 Feb-1 Apr* 10am-4.30pm. Mon-Sat. *1 Apr-31 Aug* 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sun.
WHERE? Trinity Church Square, Richmond, Yorkshire DL10 4QN
www.greenhowards.org.uk

Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre

The multi-award-winning Heritage Centre, on Ambion Hill, tells the story of the dramatic events of 22 August 1485, when King Richard III lost his life and the Tudor Dynasty was born. The interactive exhibition puts the battle in its context within the Wars of the Roses, while expert guides lead both short and long walks taking in the local views of the battlefield and explaining the background to the battle. Objects found during the Battlefield Survey are on permanent display in a nearby gallery. Regular re-enactment camps, falconry displays and workshops, education sessions for all ages, and a great tea room all add to the experience.

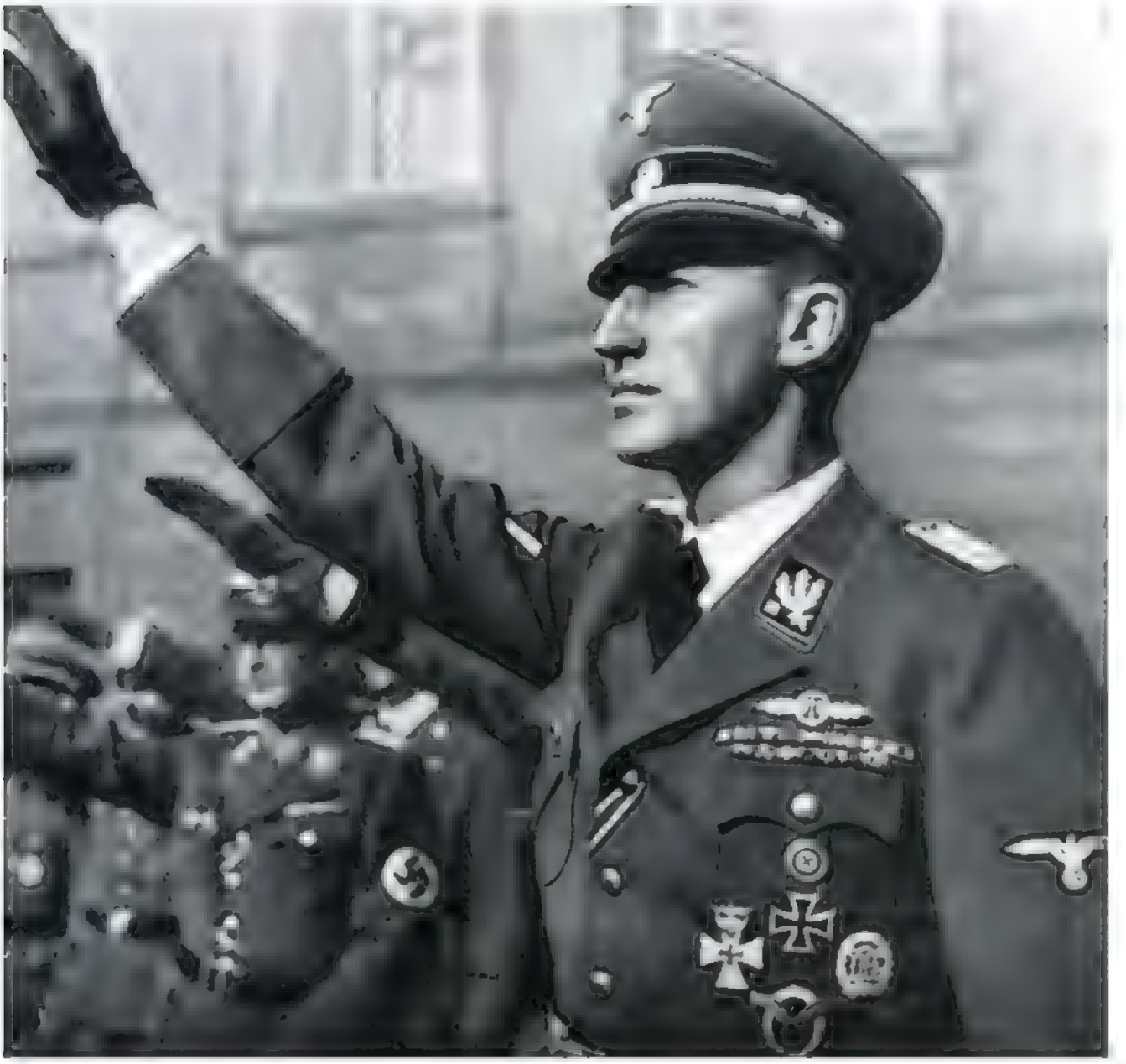
Highlight of the Bosworth year is the Anniversary Weekend (17-18 August) the armies of Richard and Henry fight it out, knights joust, and the king's guns are fired. The extensive period camps, full of soldiers and their families, are a photographer's dream.

OPENING TIMES *Apr-Oct* 10am-5pm daily. *Nov-Mar* 10am-4pm daily. Reopens on 1 Feb 2013, 10am-4.00pm.
WHERE? Sutton Cheney, Nuneaton, Leicestershire CV13 0AD
www.bosworthbattlefield.com

Killing the Beast

THE ASSASSINATION OF A *REICHSPROTEKTOR*

Is it ever acceptable to assassinate a military leader, knowing that retribution could mean the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians? **James Stejskal** looks at the killing of Nazi chief Reinhard Heydrich by the Czech resistance.



It is 10.35am, Prague, 27 May 1942. Two Czech paratroopers, Warrant Officers Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, step into the street as an official German Mercedes Benz 320C with the licence plate 'SS 3' slows down for a sharp curve in the V Holešovickách Street. The vehicle is bearing SS *Obergruppenführer* (Lieutenant General) Reinhard Heydrich, the German *Reichsprotektor* of the occupied Czechoslovakian provinces of Bohemia and Moravia. Known as the 'Blond Beast' by his colleagues, he represents all that is evil in the German occupation. In the next seconds, the fate of thousands of Czech citizens will be decided.

Gabčík swings his 9mm Sten submachine-gun into action and pulls the trigger. The weapon jams. Kubiš, seeing his partner's difficulty, lobs a grenade modified with an impact fuse at the car as Heydrich stands up to shoot at the attackers. The grenade strikes the car just behind the passenger seat and explodes, driving metal shrapnel and cloth fragments into the interior of the car, many of which hit Heydrich.

Heydrich stumbles from the car and his driver summons a passing delivery truck to transport him to hospital. In the meantime, Gabčík and Kubiš escape without verifying their target's status. Heydrich is not grievously injured but his immune system cannot cope with the foreign material introduced into his body by the blast. He goes into septicaemia and dies a week later.

On the day of the attack, the Deputy *Reichsprotektor* SS *Gruppenführer* (Major-General) Karl Hermann Frank declares a civil emergency and, in consultation with SS Leader Heinrich Himmler in Berlin, decides on retribution. On hearing of the assassination, Himmler responds:

1) I agree with going public
2) The entire Czech intelligentsia must be arrested among the first 10,000 hostages.
3) The first 100 most important adversaries among the Czech intelligentsia must be shot tonight.

Within days of the attack on Heydrich – code-named Operation Anthropoid by the resistance – the Czechoslovak population began to feel the wrath of the SS. The Germans killed an estimated 5,000 Czechs, at least 3,000 of them Jews, to avenge their comrade.

The exiled Czechoslovakian government's decision to kill Heydrich has been debated since the assassination. His case serves as an excellent litmus test of whether the targeted killing of enemy leadership can ever be justified in war.

Rise to power

Heydrich was named Acting *Reichsprotektor* to Bohemia and Moravia in September 1941 as his predecessor Konstantin von Neurath was being eased out of the position, ostensibly for 'ill health'. Neurath, a career diplomat, had not been able to quell civilian strikes against the occupation, and the Germans needed the protectorate's industrial capacity to feed its war-machine. Hitler decided he needed to be replaced, and Heydrich was selected to bring order to the troubled region. ▷

Within days of the attack, the Czechoslovak population began to feel the wrath of the SS.

Main image Reinhard Heydrich shortly before his assassination by Czech agents on 27 May 1942. **Below** Architects of the Holocaust: Himmler (left) and Heydrich (centre) in Paris around 1940.

A cashiered Navy officer, Heydrich joined the Nazi Party in 1931 and the notorious *Schutzstaffel* (SS) in 1932. From that point he worked his way up through the hierarchy of the security services. He founded and led the SS Security Service (the *Sicherheitsdienst* or SD), assumed responsibility for the Security Police (the SIPO, which included the Gestapo) in 1936, and in 1939 headed the Reich Main Security Office (the RHSA). In this position he was responsible for the suppression of any opposition to the Hitler regime throughout Germany and the occupied territories.

He created the Operational Groups (*Einsatzgruppen*), which followed the German forces into Eastern Europe as they invaded Poland and Russia. These units systematically eliminated partisan fighters and 'undesired elements' such as Jews from the occupied zones. It is estimated that the *Einsatzgruppen*, numbering only approximately 3,000 men, were responsible for the deaths of around a million people.

When Heydrich moved into Prague's Czernin Palace, he began to consolidate control immediately. Declaring martial law, he rounded up known members of the opposition and intelligentsia; within five weeks, 300 had been executed. Heydrich made clear his policies on ethnic cleansing by beginning transport of Jews from the Protectorate to concentration camps. He established a Jewish ghetto in the ancient Bohemian town of Terezín (also known as *Theresienstadt*), where at least 35,000 Jews would die.

Non-Jewish Czech citizens received preferential treatment compared to their Polish and Russian neighbours. This was due to the precision output of Czech factories, especially weapons and ammunition required by the *Reich*. Nevertheless, Heydrich clearly outlined his intentions for the protectorate when he spoke at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin on 20 January 1942 while serving as *Reichsprotektor*:

To be able to make a decision as to who is suited to be Germanised, I need their racial inventory… We have all kinds of people here, some of them are showing racial quality and good judgement. It's going to be simple to work on them – we can Germanise them. On the other hand, we have racially inferior elements and, what's worse, they demonstrate wrong judgement. These we must get out. There is a lot of space eastwards. Between these two extremes, there are those in the middle that we have to examine thoroughly. We have racially inferior people but with good judgement, then we have racially unacceptable people with bad judgement. As to the first kind, we must resettle them in the Reich or somewhere else, but we have to make sure they no longer breed, because we don't care to develop them in this area. . One group remains, though, these people are racially acceptable but hostile in their thinking – that is the most dangerous group, because it is a racially pure class of leaders. We have to think through carefully what to do with them. We can relocate some of them into the Reich, put them in a purely German environment, and then Germanise and re-educate them. If this cannot be done, we must put them against the wall.

Above President-in-exile Edvard Beneš needed to show the Allies that his people were resisting the Germans. Only then, he believed, would they agree to reject the Munich Agreement, which had allowed Germany to annex Bohemia and Moravia in the first place.

The surviving protocols of that conference establish that Heydrich was given responsibility for the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question'. He had already streamlined the process for dealing with the Jews of the protectorate. It is clear that Heydrich intended to use the population of Bohemia and Moravia to fill the needs of the German *Reich*, and then either assimilate them, move them, or dispose of them altogether.

Time for action

The Czech population's small-scale demonstrations were quickly quelled. Heydrich penetrated the Czech resistance organisation and eliminated most of its leadership. Most Czech military fighters had left the country, going to France to fight openly at the side of the French and British before being evacuated to Britain where they formed the nucleus of the Czech Army-in-exile.

To that point, the Czech resistance had been principally concerned with gathering intelligence, not direct action against the Germans. Many members of the resistance felt that any armed confrontation would lead to retribution, something they wished to avoid. Perhaps worse, the government in the occupied territory failed to repudiate the Munich Agreement, and even co-operated to a degree with their occupiers.

This was a serious problem for the Czechoslovakian government-in-exile – especially for President-in-exile Edvard Beneš, who sought support from France and Britain in anticipation of his eventual return to power in his homeland.

His main difficulty lay in the failure of Britain and France to renounce the 1938 Munich Conference that permitted Germany to annex Bohemia and Moravia – the so-called German *Sudetenland* – in the first place. As long as that was the case, the exiled Czech government felt that the country would not be allowed return to its pre-agreement borders after the war.

Another complication for Beneš was the failure of the Czech government in the occupied territory to resign or to protest the annexation. Without that, the Allies believed Czechoslovakia was not resisting the Germans with the same fervour as other occupied countries, and thus did not warrant support.

A spectacular intervention

Beneš thought that a spectacular action like the assassination of a senior German would swing the Allies to repudiate the Munich Agreement and provide more support for the resistance movement.

Therefore, with his Chief of Intelligence, Colonel František Moravec, Beneš decided to engage the British SOE (Special Operations Executive) to determine a potential assassination target. His hope was that this show of action would demonstrate his people's resistance to German occupation, possibly influence the war, and cement his role as leader of the Czech people.

While a number of Czech collaborators were considered for assassination, they

Above Josef Gabčík (right) and Jan Kubiš, the two men selected to carry out the assassination, were parachuted into a drop-zone 40km from Prague where they began the final stages of preparation for the mission.

were rejected because their deaths would not strike at the heart of the enemy. Heydrich ultimately became the logical choice. There is ample evidence that the British leadership, certainly Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was fully apprised of Beneš's intent and the target of the mission.

Selecting the assassins

With SOE assistance, two Czech non-commissioned officers, Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, were assessed, selected, and trained for the mission. Kubiš was actually a second choice, replacing Staff-Sergeant Karel Svoboda, who was injured in a parachute-training jump. Gabčík and Kubiš were first trained as parachutists, then sent to SOE-run 'special training sites' to receive further training in combatives, marksmanship, map-reading, demolitions, radio communications, and sabotage. The assessment process was rigorous, and a number of candidates – both soldiers and officers – were observed and interviewed.

Those men were told only that they were being considered for a special mission and asked to volunteer. Those who did, were observed in normal training for traits that would serve them as a clandestine operator. Foremost among these was discipline in the area of operational security.

Once the candidate group was reduced to six, one illustrative test was to give each candidate a different snippet of information with the warning not to divulge it to anyone; then the testers waited for rumours to pop up in the training camp. When two of the stories did become common knowledge, the candidates who had been entrusted with the specific details were easily eliminated from the programme.

Gabčík and Kubiš were parachuted from a modified Handley-Page Halifax bomber into a drop-zone about 40km from Prague during the early hours of 29 December 1941. They made contact with members of the resistance who were to give them assistance for the mission. Fortuitously, none of these had been compromised to the Germans and were able to assist. Gabčík and Kubiš then proceeded to Prague where they began to prepare for the mission.

From early January 1942 until the day of the assassination in late May, little is known of Gabčík's and Kubiš's activities. It is known that they stayed with relatives and members of the resistance, and made contact with teams of Czech special operators who had been parachuted into the country for other missions. They also developed at least two other plans for killing Heydrich, including an ambush outside Prague and an attempt on a train. Both were scrubbed in favour of the V Holešovičkách Street site.

> Heydrich rounded up known members of the opposition; within five weeks, 300 had been executed.

On 27 May, Gabčík and Kubiš made their move. Although the Sten failed, a back-up grenade successfully made its impression on Heydrich, whose wounds would prove fatal. With this act, the fate of thousands of Czechs was sealed. When the news reached Hitler, he instructed SS *Reichsführer* Himmler that the SS should 'wade in blood' to avenge Heydrich. This they did.

Swift retribution

Deputy *Reichsprotektor* Frank immediately declared a state of civil emergency and arrests, most of them arbitrary, began. Anyone in illegal possession of arms was subject to be shot. A number of people were summarily executed on vague denunciations or distorted information within hours of the attack on Heydrich. But, despite threats of further violence over the course of the following days, the killers were not found. Himmler assigned SS *Obergruppenführer* Kurt Daluege to replace Heydrich, and him and Frank devised a plan to exact revenge.

Using information that erroneously led them to Lidice, a small village about 20km outside Prague, an SS detachment was sent to eradicate any trace of its inhabitants. On 9 June, the ▷

Above The peaceful village of Lidice being demolished on 9 June 1942, following misinformation regarding the whereabouts of the assassins. The women and children were transported to concentration camps, the men were executed **[below]**.

SS surrounded Lidice. The men of the village were executed and the women and children sent to concentration camps. The buildings were all burned and the remnants ploughed under. The killers were still not turned in.

A second village, Lezaky, in south-western Bohemia met with the same fate. By the end of June, the SS was no closer to finding the perpetrators and had no leads. Finally, Karel Čurda, a paratrooper from one of the other teams who knew the location of the Anthropoid team, succumbed to his fears and turned himself in to the Gestapo.

Using Čurda's information, the Germans were able locate the team along with two other resistance members in the crypts of the Church of St Cyril and Methodius in downtown Prague. The church was surrounded and a gunfight ensued that only ended with the suicide deaths of the Czech resistance fighters.

After the war, at the Nuremberg Trials, General Daluege admitted that 1,331 Czechs (201 of them women) had been executed in reprisal for the assassination, along with 3,000 prisoners from Terezín concentration camp.

Was the assassination of Heydrich worth this price? There is little doubt that President-in-Exile Beneš knew that there would be massive reprisals. Colonel Moravec had received a secret message in mid-May from the resistance pleading that the operation be cancelled because of this very danger. Moravec and Beneš must have decided that the consequences would be outweighed by the need for Britain and France to repudiate the Munich Agreement.

The killing of Heydrich can be nominally justified, if not as self-defence or part of the Just War Theory, then

as an act against an unjust aggressor. Had Heydrich not been killed, he would no doubt have continued to perpetrate crimes against humanity. He was one of Hitler's brightest followers and Himmler's probable replacement, so one can only conjecture as to his impact on history had he survived.

The assassination was also meant to be a call to arms for the population of the occupied territories. As Winston Churchill commented, 'The only way to mobilise popular support for secret armies of resistance fighters during the war was to stage such dramatic acts of terrorism against the German occupying forces.'

In this regard, the mission was a failure, as the SS and the Gestapo had already crippled what was left of the resistance.

The cold, simple fact is that the assassination of Heydrich served a purpose.

The Czech underground would not pose a substantial threat to German occupation for the remainder of the war. Colonel Moravec concluded:

Perhaps 5,000 Czechs paid with their lives for the death of a single Nazi maniac. The cost and the worth of the killing of Heydrich has been the subject of much controversy. It is certainly true that the price paid for Heydrich was much higher than the figures indicate, for the Nazis executed systematically the very best of the nation. On the other hand, it is quite clear that had Heydrich lived he would have done no less. The eradication of the Czechoslovak nation and its amalgamation into the Reich, including the systematic murder of its leaders, was the assignment with which he came to Prague. In my opinion, the problem of cost can be reduced to a simple principle, so well understood by the parachutists Kubis and Gabcik: freedom and, above all, liberation from slavery have to be fought for, and this means losses in human lives.

The cold, simple fact is that the assassination of Heydrich served a purpose. Beneš had resigned as President of Czechoslovakia on 5 October 1938 after the Munich Agreement was reached. His efforts in London as head

Above The funeral procession for Reinhard Heydrich in June 1942

of the government-in-exile were oriented on one overarching goal: renunciation of the agreement and restoration of the Czechoslovakian state to its pre-war form following the defeat of Germany.

On 5 August 1942, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden sent a letter to his Czechoslovak colleague stating that in light of the German depredations in the occupied territories, Britain revoked the Munich Agreement. Two months later, France followed suit.

The goal of Operation Anthropoid was nothing less than to secure the repudiation of the Munich Agreement. In this, but at a terrible cost, Warrant Officers Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš accomplished their mission.

Further reading

Michal Burian, Aleš Knížek, Jiri Rajlich and Eduard Stehlik, *Assassination: Operation ANTHROPOID, 1941-1942*, Prague: Ministry of Defence, 2002.

Milan Hauner, 'Terrorism and Heroism: the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich', *World Policy Journal*, 22 June 2007.

The Light Infantry REVOLUTION

Tim Candlish analyses the rebirth of light infantry tactics in the French Revolutionary armies of the 1790s.

When the War of the First Coalition broke out in April 1792, Austrian and Prussian commanders assumed it would be like earlier 18th-century wars. They anticipated battles involving slow-moving blocs of highly drilled professionals discharging massed close-range volleys. Given the state of the French Army, moreover, they anticipated easy triumphs.

The regular army had largely held together, but most of its noble-born officers had fled, and the new and swelling volunteer formations were neither properly equipped or trained. To men like Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, commander of the combined Austrian and Prussian armies, Revolutionary France must have seemed like easy prey. In the 'cabinet wars' he had spent his adult-life fighting, the usual strategy was for armies to manoeuvre cautiously around each other, hoping to win by seizing the stronger ground or cutting the enemy's supply-line, rather than risking destruction in head-on battle.

This time, though, with the French armies in disarray, Brunswick could afford to be aggressive. And until the Battle of Valmy, on 20 September 1792, his strategy seemed to be working.

The French counter-offensive

Then everything changed. When the French went on the offensive after Valmy, they did so with gusto and a new way of fighting. Instead of advancing as one united army, they moved in multiple columns, taking full advantage of their swelling numbers. They also deployed a different kind of army, made up primarily of new volunteers and conscripts, designed to move quickly and fight in broken terrain, where their lack of traditional military skills was less of a disadvantage.

These light forces harassed Coalition armies by going where they were least wanted: looming on the flanks, menacing the supply-lines, and threatening to overwhelm their opponents with a fast-moving, fluid mass of independent-minded and highly motivated revolutionary soldiers.

Bewildered, Coalition generals were forced to split their armies in order to fend off their enemies, leaving them divided and vulnerable when the main French field army launched its attack. This strategy of offensive on a broad front served the French well, contributing to victories such

> The French moved in multiple columns, taking full advantage of their swelling numbers.

Right The French Revolution inaugurated a new way of war based on mass armies of citizen-soldiers. The French volunteers and conscripts compensated for relative lack of training by operating in large, loose, fast-moving formations. Light infantry tactics came into their own.

Images: © WIPL

Above The Battle of Valmy, 20 September 1792. The Austro-Prussian commander, the Duke of Brunswick, assumed that his professional army had come to disperse a rabble before restoring the French king to his throne. In fact, the revolutionaries stood their ground, and the 'cannonade at Valmy' echoed around the world. **Inset** A contemporary French image of a volunteer on his way to the front in 1792.

as Jemappes on 6 November 1792, Hondschoote on 8 September 1793, and many more.

The *légères*

While French victories in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were due to a variety of factors, the adoption of 'light warfare' was crucial. Light troops helped to bring victory on the battlefield by skirmishing, and off the battlefield by performing reconnaissance and helping to forage (since French Revolutionary and Napoleonic armies typically 'lived off the land')

They also had a strategic role, with whole demi-brigades of *légères*, as the French called light troops, employed to harass and divide enemy armies. This was a revolutionary change, but one based on developments going back decades – and echoing methods going back millennia.

It is a cliché that armies prepare for the last war, and the Coalition armies certainly did so. The deep-rooted conservatism of *ancien regime* Europe precluded any sort of radical change. Not so Revolutionary France: the fall of the monarchy, the creation of a new bourgeois republic, and the explosion of mass activity and popular enthusiasm engendered by the revolution transformed the military situation.

Psiloi and peltasts

Light warfare, of one sort or another, is as old as warfare itself. Units of light troops in loose formation have fought for millennia alongside more heavily armed and tightly ordered soldiers, the 'lights' and the 'heavies' each performing tasks for which the other was not well-suited, yet giving one another essential mutual support.

Ancient Greek warfare was traditionally focused on the hoplite phalanx, consisting of armoured spearmen in tight formation, with light infantry and cavalry operating in the skirmishing and detached roles. ▷

Right During the 5th century BC, light infantry became increasingly important in Ancient Greek warfare. This Attic red-figure *skyphos* depicts a Thracian 'peltast' – a light infantryman equipped with javelin and distinctive crescent-moon shield.

Left The volunteers and conscripts of the 1790s evolved into the mass armies with which Napoleon conquered Europe between 1799 and 1812. This Napoleonic *tirailleur* (light infantryman) of 1805 is a direct descendant.

The volunteers and conscripts preferred to move quickly and fight in broken terrain to compensate for lack of skill.

Few in number, not particularly well trained, and looked down on by the hoplites, who were their social superiors, skirmishers had little to contribute in a set-piece battle. Their battle would consist of hurling rocks or javelins, or shooting arrows, from the relative safety of close proximity to their own phalanxes, and pursuing enemy hoplites if they broke and ran

It was in the detached role that the *psiloi* or 'naked' found their niche, forming a screen around the main army and operating to seek out the enemy or to find and gather supplies. The former role was particularly important, for their task was not simply to locate the enemy army, but to prevent their enemy counterparts from doing likewise

Ancient Greek warfare usually resulted in strategic deadlock, with armies engaging only when they saw clear advantage and retreating behind city walls when they did not; full-scale pitched battle between opposing hoplite phalanxes was rare

The Battle of Sphakteria

Because of this, the Peloponnesian War of 431-404 BC took on a repetitive pattern, with Spartan armies ravaging the land around Athens in futile attempts to provoke a battle, while the Athenian navy raided as it pleased but without having the capacity to win a decisive victory against a land-based opponent. Both sides sought a new approach, one that would gain strategic advantage without the risks inherent in a traditional hoplite clash

Both turned to their light troops, recruiting more and more of them from among the lower classes. They also hired mercenaries from peoples traditionally skilled in this form of warfare, both to fight their battles and to train their recruits. Cretan archers were popular, as were slingers from the Balearic Islands. The most distinctive were the Thracian peltasts, so-called for the crescent-moon shields they carried in addition to their javelins.

Light troops finally proved what they could do with sufficient numbers and expertise on the island of Sphakteria in 425 BC. Athenian archers and peltasts managed to wear down a force of Spartan hoplites and force them to surrender

Thucydides describes the Athenians launching hit-and-run attacks, moving close enough to fire arrows and throw javelins, then running away as the Spartans charged. Lightly armoured, the Athenians were able to move over the rocky terrain easily, outpacing the heavily armoured Spartans, who were thereby ground down in a day-long battle of attrition and exhaustion in which they were never able to get to grips with their enemies

The Seven Years War

Skirmishing in support of the main army and detached operations like that at Sphakteria turn up again and again throughout history. Such tactics were well-known to 18th-century French military thinkers, who called it *petit guerre*. Eighteenth-century warfare had fallen into much the same rut as ancient Greek hoplite battle, with slow-moving

armies and few opportunities for decisive victory. Various efforts had been made to break the deadlock.

In the Seven Years War of 1756-1763, Frederick the Great of Prussia pioneered several innovations designed to make his armies more versatile and effective, and to secure the elusive victories that his desperate situation made so necessary.

His single biggest problem was the need to transport supplies from depots in the rear to his armies, creating an umbilical cord that had to be protected at any cost. Rather than risk their expensive and hard-to-replace professional soldiers in set-piece battle, 18th-century commanders generally preferred to manoeuvre around an enemy army, threatening its supply-lines and forcing it to withdraw. But because armies could move only as quickly as their supply wagons, it was exceptionally difficult to force an unwilling enemy to stand and fight.

Frederick the Great's reforms

Nonetheless, despite his vivid military imagination and dynamic intellect, Frederick was suspicious of light troops, believing that training soldiers to fight in loose formation and operate away from the main army was inviting them to desert. He may have been right: the brutalised peasant-conscripts of the Prussian Army in the 1760s were a far cry from the citizen-soldiers of Revolutionary France in the 1790s.

An important innovation, however – one pushed by Frederick's helpful younger brother Prince Henry – was to organise the troops into free-standing 'divisions', each equipped and organised so as to be able to operate independently, not unlike a Roman legion. The idea was that each division would move by itself, covering ground more quickly, while being close enough together to achieve rapid concentration when ordered.

This innovation – the independent division – laid the foundations for the third form of light warfare: as well as skirmishing and detached 'special ops', there would soon be strategic envelopment and harassment.

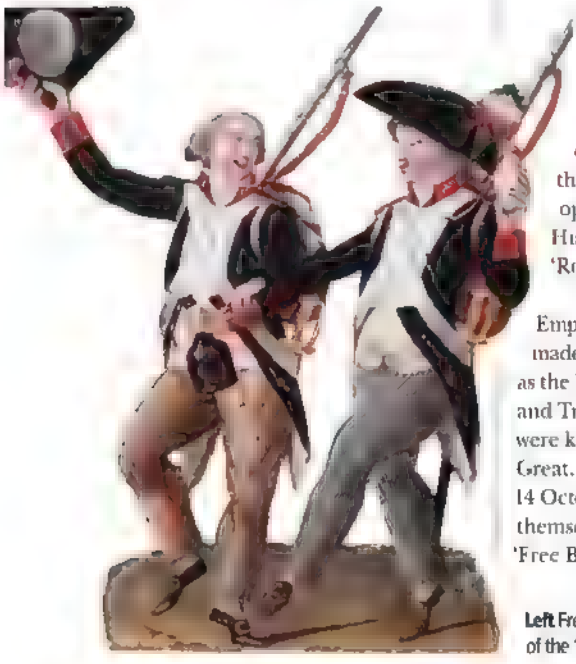
'Barbarian' auxiliaries

Frederick's reservations about light infantry did not prevent him, along with other European leaders, from making use of them if he could find them. Like the ancient Greeks, 18th-century Europeans regarded light warfare as the preserve of the barbarian 'other', of peoples who lived outside the mainstream of society.

Peoples like Native American tribesmen or Croatian *grenzers* were regarded as dangerous barbarians. But at the same time they were seen as 'natural' fighters, especially in light or 'irregular' warfare. Also like the ancient Greeks, the European armies simply did not know how to teach the skills of light warfare to their own troops. It was during the Seven Years War, however, that such skills and ideas began to spread among regular officers and military thinkers.

Major Robert Rogers is a prime example of this, creating a hand-picked force of light infantry to fight the French and their native allies on their own ground and with their own tricks during British operations in North America. His unit is known to history as 'Rogers' Rangers'.

In continental Europe, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria made extensive use of her *grenzers* – as the light infantry from the Croatian and Transylvanian military frontier were known – against Frederick the Great. At the Battle of Hochkirch on 14 October 1758, the *grenzers* proved themselves superior to Frederick's 'Free Battalions' ▷



Left French Revolutionary volunteers of the 1790s.

Above General Dumouriez leads the assault on the Austrian defences at Jemappes.

THE BATTLE OF JEMAPPES 6 NOVEMBER 1792

Jemappes was the first decisive victory of the new French Revolutionary armies against their European enemies. It illustrates at least three of the distinctive characteristics of the new way of war forged in the years 1789-1794: mobility, mass, and morale.

General Dumouriez's Armée du Nord, around 90,000 strong, marched north to drive the Austrians out of northern France. As he did so, he sent detached columns direct to the frontier to distract the Austrians and threaten their communications. Field-Marshal Sachsen-Teschen, with only 50,000 men, was thrown onto the defensive. The two main field-armies clashed at Jemappes, where Sachsen-Teschen had taken up a strong position on a ridge protected by a village, a stream, and entrenchments.

Dumouriez divided his 38,000 men into three divisions, one to assault the village on the Austrian right, one to attempt an outflanking move against the Austrian left, and the largest to mount the main attack in the centre. Sachsen-Teschen's 13,000 men fought a tough defensive battle and threw back several French assaults. But, heavily outnumbered and lacking the fluidity and flexibility of their opponents, they remained anchored in their original positions and were unable to exploit any momentary successes.

The French, by contrast, reformed and renewed the assault after each reverse. They eventually broke into the village on the Austrian right and thereby imperilled Sachsen-Teschen's entire position. The Austrians broke off the engagement in the early afternoon and retreated northwards. The revolutionaries swarmed into Belgium and captured Brussels.

Steeled by victory, the Revolution made a radical turn. The National Convention declared its determination 'to give fraternal support to all people who wish to regain their liberty'. Leading revolutionaries like Danton proclaimed the intention to revolutionise Europe with a policy of 'war on the *châteaux* and peace to the cottages'. The execution of King Louis XVI on 21 January 1793 sounded the death-knell of *ancien régime* Europe and the inauguration of a new age of republicanism, nationalism, and citizenship. A revolution in war had secured the triumph of a revolution in politics.

French armies became a fast-moving, fluid mass of independent-minded and highly motivated revolutionary soldiers.

Above Light troops were not new to European warfare in the 1790s. Continental armies had employed both light infantry and light cavalry during earlier 18th-century conflicts. But these had usually been 'barbarian' irregulars from the wilder parts of Europe. The Hungarian hussars of the Habsburg Empire (as depicted here) were originally such. The big innovation of the 1790s was to turn large numbers of regular recruits into light infantry and give light infantry a central role in battlefield tactics.

The French tradition

Prussia enjoyed success in the Seven Years War, but for France the war was a humiliating defeat. French society debated loudly with itself how things could have gone so badly wrong. One result was an explosion of new ideas among military thinkers like Pierre de Bourcet and Jacques Guibert, with more and more attention being given to light troops. By the time the Bastille fell, the French regular army included 12 battalions of light infantry, whose skills would soon prove invaluable.

Light troops were fully accepted in European armies by this time, but debates nevertheless raged as to how many were needed and what they should be allowed to do. The usual approach in *ancien regime* armies was for each battalion of line infantry to maintain a light company, while light cavalry were heavily influenced by the Hungarian hussars, especially their distinctive uniforms. In sharp contrast, Revolutionary France would raise light troops by the battalion and even the demi-brigade.

Destruction complete

France adopted a new approach because a revolutionary society is wide open to innovation, because it was fielding mass armies of semi-trained volunteers and conscripts, and because the beleaguered First Republic was in desperate need of victories. Under attack from all sides, Revolutionary France did not have the time or resources to engage in the traditional wars of manoeuvre. France's enemies had to be crushed quickly, as Lazare Carnot was forever reminding the generals, calling for their complete destruction.

Mass volunteering and organised conscription meant that France had plenty of manpower, but neither the time nor the experienced officers needed to turn recruits into traditional line units, a process that could take years. Light troops needed nothing like as much training, as they did not use the same rigid formations and complex manoeuvres as line troops. Training new recruits as light infantry meant that they could be put to use relatively quickly.

Effective skirmishing was useful on the battlefield itself, but light troops were also needed to operate on detachment. French armies were able to move more quickly in part because they were spread out in divisions, but also because they lived off the land wherever possible, making all the more work for light infantry and cavalry.

But it was the third form of light warfare – using light troops in a strategic role – which brought it all together. Once on campaign, light divisions could harass enemy armies and box them in, preventing them from escaping or outmanoeuvring the line divisions as they moved in for the kill. These methods brought France victory after victory all across Europe, forcing France's enemies to adapt the new way of war for their own use.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Candlish is finishing PhD corrections under Professor Alan Forrest at the University of York.

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FEBRUARY 2013

On Manoeuvres

DATES TO REMEMBER

THIS FEBRUARY

February What were the intellectual, cultural, and political repercussions of Charles I's marriage to the French princess Henrietta Maria? Which member of the armed forces took the most stunning photograph of 2012? And how does a landlubber learn to swear like a sailor? All these questions will be answered by this month's diverse Dates to Remember.

Keith Robinson takes a trip to windswept Salisbury Plain for our museum review. There he finds much to enjoy at a splendid museum dedicated to military aviation.

For our War Zone, Mark Felton revisits the nightmare of the Japanese takeover of Shanghai during the Second World War.

Listings 62

Museum 64

War Zone 66

DATES TO REMEMBER

CONFERENCE

Back by popular demand, the RAF Museum will once again be displaying the Royal Air Force Photographer of the Year exhibition in the Milestones of Flight gallery. Taken by serving personnel, the photographs in this show offer the public behind-the-scenes access to the lives of British forces at work, rest and play – both at home and in the field.

The exhibition will be displayed on boards next to the RAF Today area of Milestones of Flight, with images simultaneously beamed onto glass panels located in the RAF Today.

CAPTURING CONFLICT

Milestones of Flight

London, NW9 5LL

020 8205 2266

www.rafmuseum.org.uk

FREE ENTRY

DEMONSTRATION

Gun show

Experience the mighty power of the big guns in the collection at the Royal Artillery Museum in a series of free gun-firing demonstrations. These will feature artillery from around the globe, but all of the guns would have made up part of Fort Nelson's original armaments. The demonstration firings will be performed by a uniformed detachment from the Portsdown Artillery Volunteers.

Big Gun Displays

Royal Artillery Museum
Fort Nelson
Fareham
PO17 6AN

01329 233 734

FREE ENTRY

EXHIBITION

£5 ENTRY

EXHIBITION

Cultural immersion

The Big Picture Show is an award-winning 360-degree experience that is unique to IWM North. Using surround-sound and projected digital moving images and photographs, the show brings to life people's experiences of war. It immerses you in the heart of the action, creating a complete sensory experience that is totally involving – and often very moving.

0161 836 4000

www.iwm.org.uk

FREE ENTRY

FAIR

Collectors' convention

This event, held at the Swallow Hotel, attracts some of the UK's best-known militaria dealers, so collectors can buy, sell, or exchange a wide range of military collectables from many historical eras. In addition to quality reference books, items at the fair will include medals, badges, swords, daggers, helmets, flags, field equipment, legally deactivated weapons, and military vehicles.

Preston Arms & Militaria Fair

01254 263 260
www.prestonarmsfair.co.uk

£3 ENTRY

EVENT

Land-lubbers and bin rats

Take a look at Navy slang and the origin of popular phrases, discovering how these old sayings link to life at sea while you learn about the importance of the Navy in British history and culture. In this interactive event, further your knowledge of the activities that took place aboard Royal Navy ships, and handle objects that would have been used by those sailing them.

FREE ENTRY

PERFORMANCE

Children of the war

This 45-minute performance piece deals with Pauly, a young girl growing up in Manchester during the Second World War. Written by Emily Capstick, the performance uses archive film and specially commissioned animation to enhance the experience. After the show, you have the chance to meet evacuee Terry Perkins and find out about the effect the Blitz had on him as a child.

Pauly's War

0161 838 9190
www.pmft.org.uk

FREE ENTRY

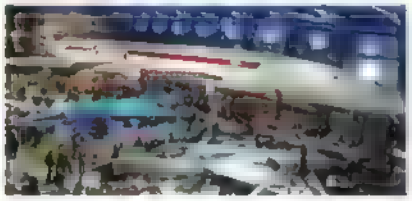
CONFERENCE

This conference – the third in a series leading up to the 400th anniversary of the inception of the Queen's House in 1616 – will analyse the 1625 celebrations of the marriage of Charles I to the French princess Henrietta Maria. The lectures will examine the union from an interdisciplinary perspective, putting them in their intellectual, cultural, and political contexts. They aim to uncover the differences and misunderstandings beneath the outward celebration of concord, and show how an alliance which promised well for future relations between Britain and France soon created tension and provoked acts of hostility.

The two-day conference will be of interest to scholars working in the field of early modern festivals, as well as general historians, art and theatre historians, literature and material-culture specialists, and musicologists.

£75 ENTRY

SHOW



***Hermes* on parade**

A detailed representation of HMS *Hermes* that has taken Rex Hunt over five years to build will be just one of the amazing models at the Fleet Air Arm's Model Show. Now in its 17th year, it is the biggest of its kind in the South West, and typically attracts some 2,000 visitors. Over 120 traders and clubs will exhibit model aircraft, boats, tanks, and dioramas.

Competitions at the event have generous prizes sponsored by Airfix, so be sure to bring along your own best models!

Model Show
9 February
Fleet Air Arm Muse
RNAS Yeovilton
Somerset, BA22 8HT

01935 840 565
www.fleetairarm.com

FREE ENTRY

Museum of Army Flying

[redacted] finds plenty to see at a splendid museum of military aviation on windswept Salisbury Plain.

Located in Hampshire, south-west of Andover and within sight of Danebury Iron Age Hillfort, the Museum of Army Flying lies within the grounds of the Army Air Corps airfield at Middle Wallop, one of the most important RAF bases during the Battle of Britain.

It is always good to visit a museum which is part of a living complex, where past and present lie side by side. The museum makes good use of this by having a café on the first floor with a balcony that gives a good view of the working airfield. With plenty of space outside, there are also a couple of aircraft there to entice the visitor into the open air.

Below Horsa Mark II at the D-Day landings

The first of these is a Westland Scout AH Mark I helicopter, XP910 c/n F9513. Both the Scout and the Navy's Westland Wasp were developed from the Saunders-Roe P.531, before the project and the company were taken over by Westland. Conceived as a general-purpose military light helicopter, the production version first flew in 1960.

It was originally powered by a Rolls-Royce Nimbus 101 engine, the early operational life of which was notoriously poor, only sustaining four to six hours before requiring changing. However, by the end of 1964, it was down to only two or three changes per 1,000 flying hours, and thus became the standard helicopter for light work such as observation and liaison.

Our example first flew with the Army Air Corps (AAC) in December 1963. In the main hall, suspended from the roof, there is an example of a trial version P.531 of 1958, kitted out in an anti-tank role, carrying a pair of SS11 rockets on each flank with a roof-mounted sight.

The Beaver

The second of the aircraft displayed outside is a DHC-2 Beaver AI.1, which has been reconstructed from original parts. It is a single-engined, propeller-driven plane with high wings, similar to the Lysander. It was built and designed by de Havilland Canada, and with around 1,700 built was one of Canada's most successful aeroplanes. Built as a 'bush plane', it was rugged and had short take-off and landing (STOL) capabilities; while production ceased in 1969, many are still flying today.

Several hundred were bought by the US Army as a general utility aircraft, and an NZAF (New Zealand Air Force) Beaver flew in support of Sir Edmund Hillary's expedition to the South Pole in 1958.

5

1. Westland Scout
2. Uniforms of Army fliers
3. Auster AOP9
4. Sopwith Pup
5. Operation Market Garden display
6. German Field Kitchen, c.1914

6

The Beaver AL1 was the variant designed specifically for the British Army. A complete original Beaver, XP821, can be found in the main hangar. This one saw service in Malaya and Singapore before being loaned to the British Embassy in Laos. It is painted in cream and grey to indicate its neutrality, despite which, on a trip from Vientiane, it was hit by a Russian-made RPG7 missile from across the Mekong River. The missile punched a hole through the port wing, but the plane was able to make a safe landing.

Balloons, gliders, and pups

On entering the main exhibition hall, one of the first exhibits you see is a display of five 'pilot' uniforms which effectively sum up the history of Army flying. The first represents the pioneering years of Army flight in the form of the Royal Engineer Balloon Sections (1878-1912), followed by the dominant force in early British military aviation, the Royal Flying Corps (1912-1918). We then have the Royal Artillery Observation Post Squadrons (1941-1957) and the Glider Pilot Regiment (1942-1957), which in 1957 were amalgamated to form today's Army Air Corps.

The layout of the museum basically follows this historical tree, with much of the earliest material based on models, images, and textual displays. The displays get into full swing with the section on the RFC and WWI. There is a fine example of a Sopwith Pup, N5915, on show.

Above DHC-2 Beaver AL1

The Pup had good handling qualities and was generally liked by its pilots. A single-seater biplane, it was powered by a single nine-cylinder Le Rhone 9C rotary engine, and carried a single fixed, synchronised .303 Vickers machine-gun. It first saw service on the Western Front with the RNAS in October 1916, and the following year three RFC squadrons were equipped with it.

Planes and choppers

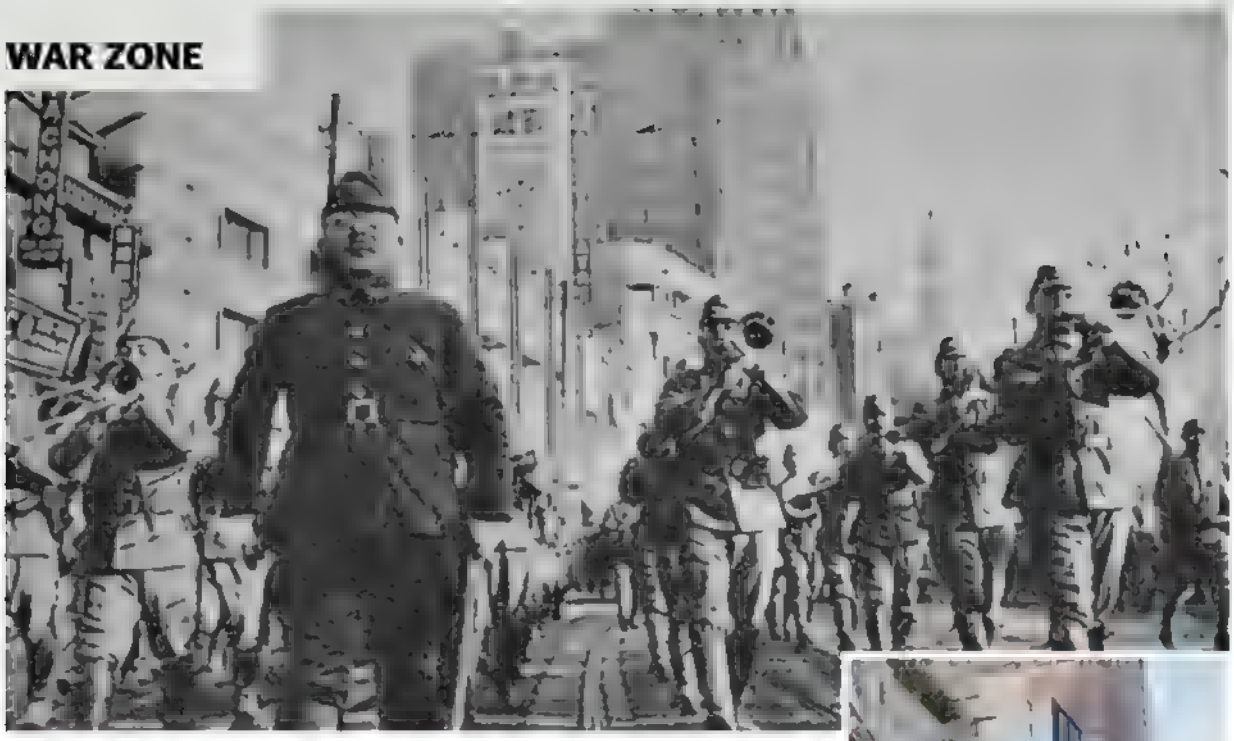
Passing a rare example of a WWI German Field Kitchen, one enters the main hall, where a selection of light aircraft and helicopters covering WWII up to modern times are on display. One passes from an Auster AOP9 and a Cessna L19 Bird Dog, past an Aerospatiale Gazelle AH1, to an example of a Bristow Helicopters' Bell 47 – which for many years was the basic training chopper at Middle Wallop. For some fun, though, you can climb into the back of a Westland Lynx AH1, get a real feel for the cramped space, and view the complex control panels.

Passing through a series of displays detailing operations at the 'End of Empire', we enter another large hall. This deals primarily with the work of the Glider Pilot Regiment, and in particular with operations on D-Day and the famous failed Operation Market Garden. Here there are examples of the standard British glider, the Airspeed Horsa Mark II, and the heavy-lift Hamilcar Glider. A small Hotspur Glider, mostly used for training, has its slim cigar-shaped body suspended from the roof. But dwarfing them all is the huge US Waco CG-4A Hadrian Glider, with its wingspan of 83'8" (25.5m) and length of 48'8" (14.8m).

Much to see.

The Museum of Army Flying is open 10am-4.30pm daily, last admission 4pm; the café and Play Park close at 4pm. Entry is £9 for adults, £6.50-£7.50 concessions, free under-5s.

01264 784421
www.armyflying.com



City of Terror

The Japanese takeover of Shanghai

Mark Felton revisits the nightmare of the Japanese takeover of foreign 'concessions' during the Second World War.

Above A Japanese Army band marches up West Nanjing Road past the Park Hotel and the Grand Theatre during a large parade to celebrate the capture of the International Settlement in December 1941.

'Obviously, there is nothing you can do with the forces at your disposal. I would suggest that you strike your colours,' was the last communication Lieutenant Stephen Polkinghorn had with the British Embassy in Shanghai. Polkinghorn replaced the receiver in its cradle, his lip curling in disgust. He had just been advised to surrender HMS *Peterel*, the Royal Navy's last remaining Yangtze River gunboat in mainland China, to the Japanese.

She sat moored on the Huangpu River opposite the Bund, Shanghai's glittering neoclassical 'Million Dollar Mile'. It was early morning, 8 December 1941, and the word 'surrender' was not in Polkinghorn's vocabulary. A Japanese gunboat moved in the distance, a signal lamp sending coded Morse to the riverbank, and a curl of smoke rose from the funnel of the huge Japanese cruiser *Izumo* moored close by.

The *Peterel* had been protecting British trade on China's rivers since 1927, but now she had been reduced to a floating communications station on the Huangpu, organising supplies to the Chinese Army. Her two 3-inch guns had been mothballed, and her crew reduced from 55 to just 20 men.

'Britain is at war with Japan'

Moored close by was an American gunboat, the USS *Wake*, also stripped of defensive weapons and most of her crew. Lieutenant Polkinghorn, the *Peterel*'s Royal Naval Reserve skipper, had been below when he received the final phone call from the embassy. The voice at the other end was terse and to the point: 'The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and Britain is consequently at war with Japan!'

Polkinghorn was not surprised. 'You can expect a visit from the Japanese at any time,' continued the measured tones of the diplomat. Polkinghorn's vessel represented the last regular British armed forces in Shanghai, and naval honour dictated that he could not surrender his ship without a gesture of defiance.

Polkinghorn ordered: 'Action stations!' when a Japanese launch was seen approaching his vessel. Steel helmets were donned and two Lewis machine-guns were loaded, their circular ammo pans smacked into place, and the weapons cocked with a solid chck. It was 4am, and close by the *Wake* was being boarded by the Japanese – her skipper, Lieutenant-Commander Columbus Smith, was still at his apartment ashore when his ship was captured.

Apart from the *Peterel* and the *Wake*, there was precious little else with which to defend foreign Shanghai from the Japanese. The Royal Navy had long since withdrawn its cruisers to fight in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. The multinational Shanghai Volunteer Corps (SVC), a British-led defence force formed in 1854, was told to stand down on 8 December 1941. The SVC represented the international character of Shanghai in the mid-20th century, with units as diverse as the kilted Shanghai Scottish, Russian Regiment, and Jewish Company.

A Russian doll

Shanghai itself was really three cities within one – like a Russian doll. The International Settlement, dominated by

the British and American concessions, occupied the heart of the city, and, although not technically a colony of any nation, was firmly ruled by the Anglo-American municipal council. South of the Settlement was the French Concession, ruled directly from Hanoi in Indochina. Surrounding these two conjoined entities was the Chinese Municipality, governed at different times by warlords or the central government in Nanking.

The Japanese, whose own concession consisted of the Hongkew District just north of the Bund, had occupied all of Chinese Shanghai in 1937 as they gobbled-up eastern China in great devastated chunks. It was only a matter of time before they swallowed up the sweet prize of foreign Shanghai as well.

The British government had declared the Settlement indefensible in 1940, and withdrawn the two regular infantry battalions that formed the garrison to Hong Kong. The Americans had followed suit shortly after. Over 8,000 defenceless British citizens continued to live and work in Shanghai, alongside nearly 2,000 Americans and the citizens of many other nations. There were also thousands of stateless White Russians who had fled the Russian Civil War, as well as over 20,000 Jews who had escaped Nazi persecution to the only free port left open to them.

'Get off my bloody ship'

Onboard the *Peterel*, a small group of Japanese army officers, samurai swords at their sides, climbed the ladder onto the quarterdeck and saluted stiffly. Lieutenant Polkinghorn listened impatiently to their interpreter as the Japanese ordered the New Zealander to surrender his ship immediately or face the consequences.

Polkinghorn drew himself up to his full height, stuck out his chin, and hissed 'Get off my bloody ship!' The astonished Japanese officers silently filed back into their launch, dumbfounded at the young officer's suicidal boldness.

Grim-faced, Polkinghorn's two dozen ratings took cover behind sandbags piled in the gangways, the men manning the machine-guns staring intently at the grey bulk of the *Izumo* as the booming report of its massive guns echoed across a city that was just coming to life, rattling windows throughout the International Settlement.

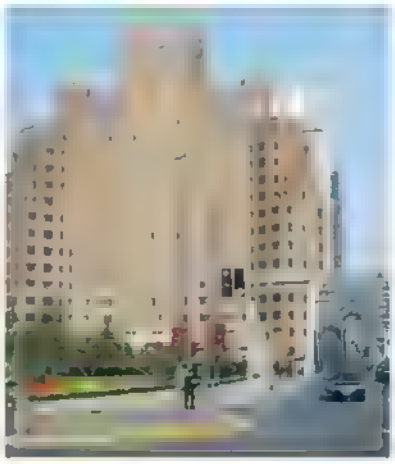
The *Peterel* was already rigged with scuttling charges, and Polkinghorn's decision to put up a fight was necessary to buy enough time to send his ship to the bottom of the river. He cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled 'Open fire!'

The chattering machine-guns blasted long lines of bullets at the monolithic structure of the Japanese cruiser, wounding several Japanese, but these were soon drowned out by the whoosh of shells throwing up giant geysers of dirty river water all around the tiny British ship.

With a blinding flash and a deafening concussion the *Peterel* was struck, the ship heaving over hard against her cables, flames shooting into the air. Within minutes the whole superstructure was on fire, bodies littered the blood-soaked deck, and the cacophony of battle intermingled with the high-pitched screaming of the wounded and the copper-stench of blood.

The *Peterel* lurched again and began to take on a startling list. 'Abandon ship, abandon ship!' yelled Polkinghorn as the vessel threatened to capsize. Men plunged into the brown river, casting away their helmets. Polkinghorn wrenched off his binoculars and followed.

Below A Japanese sergeant stops and searches a Shanghai resident at gunpoint during the summer of 1942.

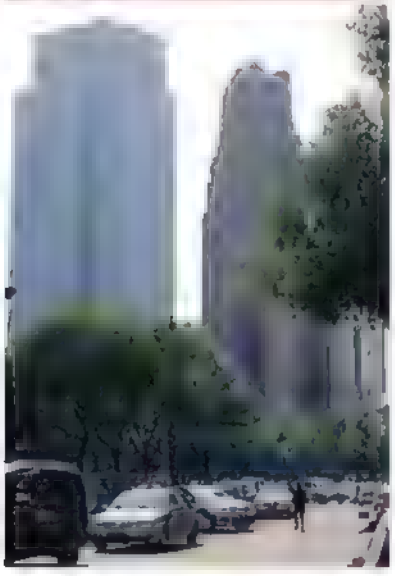


Above Japanese Special Naval Landing Force marines drive across Garden Bridge (now Waibaidu Bridge) past Shanghai Mansions and onto the Bund on the morning of 8 December 1941.

'Mr Trees'

Apart from this one small battle, the Japanese takeover of Shanghai was remarkably bloodless and terrifyingly quick. The British lost five killed and 14 taken prisoner. One man escaped. Petty Officer James Cuming, a radio operator, was ashore when the Japanese attacked, and he joined the Chinese resistance. For three-and-a-half years, Cuming, using the alias 'Mr Trees', played a cat-and-mouse game with Japanese intelligence, but he was never caught. Lieutenant Polkinghorn was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross after the war.

At the north end of the Bund, the British-built Garden Bridge spans ▷



Above Japanese Type-95 light tanks occupy the streets around the Race Course (now People's Square) on the morning of 8 December 1941.

Suzhou Creek with the imposing edifice of Shanghai Mansions towering behind. Across the iron bridge, where since 1937 Japanese sentries had controlled access to the Settlement from Hongkew, Japanese Type-95 Ha-Go light tanks and Vickers-Crossley armoured cars (ironically British-built) trundled noisily across, followed by trucks flying the Rising Sun flag. Loaded aboard were the men of the 746-strong Shanghai Special Naval Landing Force – Japanese marines.

The tanks and trucks moved along the Bund, while others drove up Nanking Road, Shanghai's main shopping thoroughfare, towards the Race Course (today's People's Square), dominated by the tallest building in Shanghai, the dark-brown Park Hotel. Chinese rickshaw pullers and coolies scattered at the approach of the 'shrimp barbarians', as the Chinese called the Japanese.

Wearing blue landing rig with army helmets and webbing, the Japanese troops toted long Arisaka rifles with fixed bayonets. Several parties of Japanese marines on foot, accompanied by Japanese civilians wearing white Rising Sun armbands, entered the many foreign-owned banks and insurance buildings that lined the Bund and the streets behind, some plastering notices onto their elaborate wrought-iron gates proclaiming that these premises were now under Japanese military control.

Not exactly dogs of war

Shanghai fell under the control of Lieutenant-General Shigeru Sawada, commander of the 13th Army. Headquartered in Shanghai, Sawada's four infantry divisions controlled a huge swathe of territory astride the Yangtze River towards Nanking. The 11th Independent Mixed Brigade provided the Japanese garrison in Shanghai, while the naval base was the responsibility of the Imperial Navy.

British resistance to the Japanese takeover once the *Peterel* had been sunk and the SVC disarmed revolved around Oriental Mission (OM), an SOE sabotage and intelligence-gathering group. OM's original orders were to keep an eye on Shanghai's Nazis, and to plan an attack on the Fascist Italian gunboat *Eritrea* moored on the Bund.

This was to prove rather a tall order, for OM consisted of a few middle-aged Britons led by 55-year-old wine merchant William Gande. The other members were two company managers, a surveyor, a stockbroker, and 65-year-old William Clarke, former Deputy-Commissioner of the Shanghai Municipal Police: not exactly dogs of war.

OM Shanghai achieved nothing and was soon rounded up by the Kempeitai, Japan's much-feared military police, and horribly tortured at Bridge House. In a truly astounding mistake, the British had remitted £5,000 of operating funds through HSBC on the Bund, using Gande's name. When the Japanese liquidated Allied assets, this transfer of funds was discovered and OM Shanghai swiftly eliminated.

'The Japanese were showing their teeth'

The round-ups of foreigners began on 5 November 1942 when the Kempeitai launched early-morning raids, arresting 243 Britons, 65 Americans, 20 Dutch, and some other foreign nationals, totalling 350 men in all. Labelled 'Prominent Citizens', they were hauled off to Haiphong Road Camp, run by the Imperial Japanese Army. 'The Japanese were showing their teeth,' recalled arrested British reporter Ralph Shaw, 'and, from their record of cruelty in China, we knew that many of us were going to suffer indescribable ill-treatment.'

Bridge House, a large white apartment block just across Garden Bridge, became the main Kempeitai interrogation centre, and by February 1942 the Japanese had arrested many foreign journalists, businessmen, and police officers. Some were held for months, beaten, whipped, given the water torture, electrocuted, and starved.

The Japanese subjected American reporter John B Powell to 'atrocious

Below HMS *Peterel*, the last British gunboat in China, sunk in a blaze of glory on the Huangpu River on 8 December 1941 – the only resistance to the Japanese takeover of the International Settlement.

assaults, beating him unmercifully,' recalled Shaw. H G W Woodhead, outspoken British editor of *Oriental Affairs*, who had attacked the Japanese for their earlier outrages in China, almost died. Sir Frederick Maze, former inspector-general of Chinese Customs was tortured for four weeks before being released without charge. Anyone even remotely suspected of being 'anti-Japanese' was arrested and tortured. Fear of a knock on the door in the middle of the night was literal.

'Every time you got an illness it spread'

The Japanese issued regulations to make life for Allied nationals as unpleasant as possible. Access to bank accounts was severely restricted, and Allied citizens were required to purchase a red armband that was emblazoned with a letter denoting their nationality ('B' for British, 'A' for American, 'N' for Netherlander, etc).

Many foreigners were ordered to remain at their jobs running Shanghai's police and essential services. But Allied citizens were forthwith forbidden from entering theatres, cinemas, dance halls, nightclubs, the Canidrome in the French Concession, and the Race Course. They were also ordered to surrender all radios, cameras, binoculars, and telescopes. Some Allied citizens were repatriated from Shanghai, but the majority faced over three years of imprisonment under deteriorating conditions.

Between January and July 1943 the Japanese rounded up 7,600 Allied men, women, and children and sent them to camps in Shanghai or upriver in Yangchow (now Yangzhou). They were force-marched through downtown Shanghai to humiliate them in front of the Chinese. Single men were sent across the river to Pootung Camp, a dilapidated former British-American Tobacco warehouse. The remainder went to seven camps in the city, including the Lunghua Camp, where a young J G Ballard was one of 2,000 inmates; he later wrote about his experiences in *Empire of the Sun*.

'Almost everyone who had diabetes died,' recalled Ronald Calder, another child inmate. 'Every time you got an illness it spread and there was never a chance to get well again.' Moira Chisholm, who was interned in Chapei Camp aged 9 in 1943, recalled the violence. 'Adults were beaten up all the time and we got quite blasé about seeing this.' Chapei consisted of two three-storey blocks and a chemical factory on a 15-acre site into which 1,500 internees were crammed

'You could get beaten for moving'

Food in the camps was always short, they were overcrowded with minimal washing facilities, and brutality was ever-present. Disease was the biggest killer, with the elderly and the young being particularly susceptible. Ash Camp, a former British Army barracks named for its black ash pathways, housed over 500 internees in family rooms or dormitories that flooded during heavy rain.

The Japanese enforced strict discipline upon the internees, particularly during *tenko* (roll call). 'If you moved or went in your room or had to go to the bathroom or anything, it didn't matter if you were a little baby or a grown-up, you didn't dare do that because you could get slapped around or beaten for moving,' said Rachel Bosebury Beck

Before the nightmare of Japanese occupation came to an end in August 1945, over 250 British citizens had perished in the Shanghai internment camps. 'You had this constant fear that you might have been shot,' recalled Bosebury Beck, 'picked up, tortured, any time. That was a fear, and it's terrible.'

Further information

Mark Felton's *Japan's Gestapo: murder, mayhem and torture in wartime Asia* (Pen & Sword Books, 2009) and *Children of the Camps: Japan's forgotten victims* (Pen & Sword Books, 2011) both have chapters on Japanese-occupied Shanghai.

Below & right Chinese clamour to remove their savings from a branch of Bank of China on West Nanjing Road (next door to Marks & Spencer today) while a Japanese soldier with fixed bayonet stands guard alongside several officers of the Shanghai Municipal Police.

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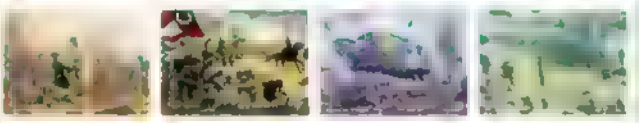

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FEBRUARY 2013

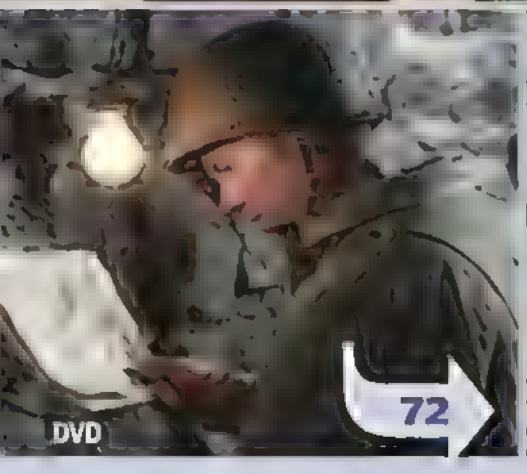
MHM Reviews

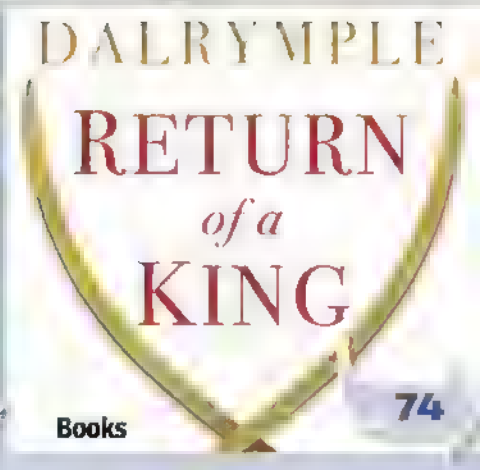
DVD TV BOOKS

February William Dalrymple furthers our knowledge of Britain's involvement in Afghanistan during the First Anglo-Afghan War with his new book *Return of a King*, reviewed for *MHM* by Jules Stewart. David Flintham looks at the life of Général d'Armée Philippe Leclerc, as celebrated in William Mortimer Moore's *Free France's Lion*, and Mark Corby highly recommends Jerry Murland's *Battle on the Aisne 1914: the BEF and the birth of the Western Front.*

The Military History Channel has a selection of new programmes and new series starting this month. Highlights include *The Real Inglourious Basterds, Hitler and the Occult*, and *DMZ: monumental challenge.*

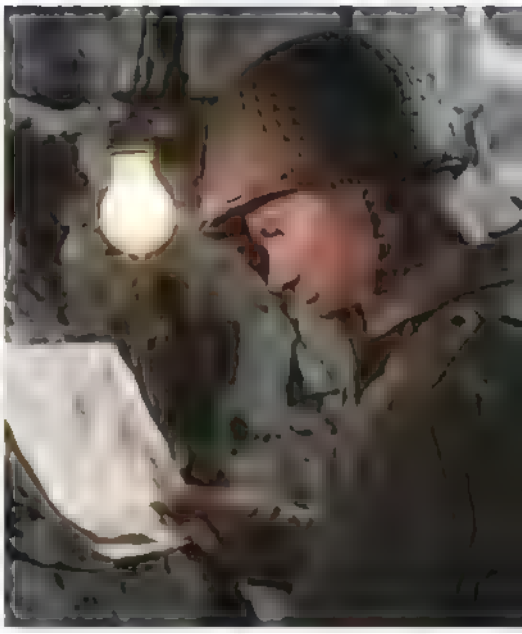
Nearly 10 years after the release of *Saints and Soldiers*, director Ryan Little has finally got round to making the prequel, our DVD this month, *Saints and Soldiers 2: Airborne Creed.*





DVD

SAINTS AND SOLDIERS 2: AIRBORNE CREED



METRODOME DISTRIBUTION
27 SEPTEMBER 2012
£11.99

This WWII drama bases its action around Operation Dragoon, a vital part of the 1944 D-Day Landings. It acts as a prequel to Canadian director Ryan Little's *Saints and Soldiers*, made ten years ago, which dealt with the Malmedy Massacre during the Battle of the Bulge.

Little's first offering was an impressive master-class in creating entertaining, enjoyable war films on a budget of less than £1 million. It was moving and hard-hitting; far more so than the newest version, despite the latter's higher budget.

After landing in France on 15 August 1944, three isolated paratroopers come across a group of French Resistance fighters in desperate need. The three men decide to risk their own lives to help the captive partisans. And, as formula requires, the men could not be more different.

Rossi is the no-nonsense tough-guy from the inner city, who skipped school but earns respect as a skilled soldier and boxer. More than just a mindless grunt, Rossi is a troubled individual who is badly affected by the violence he sees (portrayed through numerous flashbacks).

Curtis is the All-American hero, the quarter-back jock distracted from the action by longings for his equally All-American sweetheart back home. Again, regular flashbacks leave little to the imagination.

Finally, Jones, the devoutly religious father-figure, provides sporadic didactic rants about the moral do's and don't's of warfare. Clashing with the bravado of the other two men, Jones' input highlights for the viewer the religious themes of the film: the dual nature of humans and the justifications of the so-called 'righteous war'. For which, according to this film, there were many.

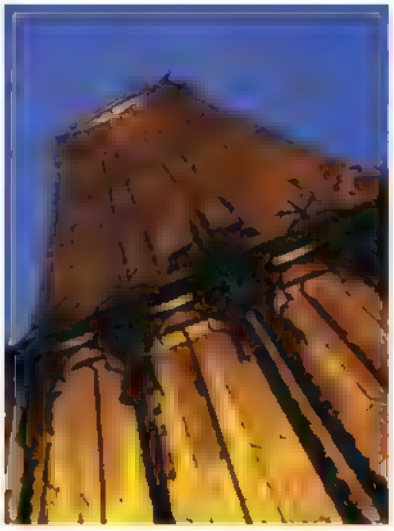
Little falls foul of a few war-film cliches: the slow-motion close-ups, the choral music, and the endless stream of flashbacks which detract from the complex nut this film is trying to crack. This is almost redeemed by the on-screen chemistry between the three main characters. Almost, but not quite.

The film is well-acted, and Little has once again managed to use a still comparatively small budget to full effect. The problem is that not only has this sort of film been done before, it has been done far better and on a far grander scale. Both *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Thin Red Line* dealt with the same themes as this film, but did so in a more believable and tasteful way.

TV HIGHLIGHTS
ON MILITARY HISTORY
Sky 531 Virgin Media 236

TOP GUNS
Premières Monday 11 February at 9pm

Top Guns is an action-packed new series where the greatest weapons of all time are pushed to their limits in search of ballistic supremacy. In every episode, two skilled marksmen and *Top Shot* host Colby Donaldson will lock and load three iconic weapons, then push them to their limits as they decide which one is the supreme. Along the way, they reveal the incredible history behind weapons like the Kentucky Flintlock, the M14, the world-renowned Colt .45 revolver, and many more. Friendly competition between the shooters and surprising facts about these firearms permeate each episode. While testing these weapons, Colby and the marksmen will shoot at targets designed to reveal which ones truly are the "top guns".



BIG MONUMENTAL CHALLENGE
Premières Monday 11 February at 6pm

The Sydney Harbour Bridge hosts a huge picnic; the Eiffel Tower rebuilds its original hydraulic elevator system, Big Ben examines a threat to its very fabric; and the Taj Mahal races to get ready for the Commonwealth Games. In this fast-paced series, we go behind the scenes to follow the highs and lows of making these monuments great again. Combining stunning footage, impressive CGI to reveal the end-point, riveting historical background, and any number of lively characters ..

THE REAL INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS
Premières Sunday 3 February at 9pm

During WWII, the US government's newly formed Office of Strategic Services trained thousands of men and launched hundreds of undercover missions. *The Real Inglounous Basterds* recounts the thrilling story of one of the most successful of these missions – Operation Greenup, comprising two young Jewish refugees and one *Wehrmacht* officer. Three unlikely brothers-in-arms parachute one perilous winter night into the Austrian Alps, risking their lives to strike back at Nazi Germany. Meet the Real Inglourious Basterds.

HITLER & THE OCCULT
Premières Sunday 10 February at 9pm

For the branding of his Nazi Party, Hitler assumed Christian symbolism such as the Spear of Destiny and the Holy Grail. His imprisonment after the failed 1923 Munich Beer Hall Putsch would make him a national hero for his defence of a strong German state, and convinced him that he was a Messiah who could save Germany. Did Hitler's obsession with astrology, numerology, ancient runes, and German mythology enable him to make his early brash moves – but ultimately spell the Third Reich's doom?

BOOKS

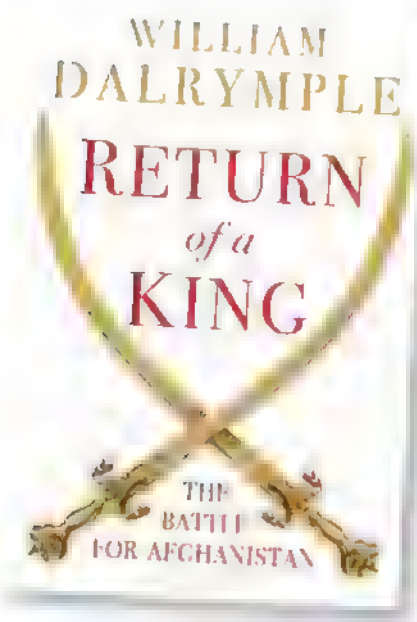
RETURN OF A KING

William Dalrymple
Bloomsbury, £25.00
ISBN 978-1408818305

Well might one ask, what remains to be said about the First Anglo-Afghan War, a catastrophe that has drained the pens of historians from Sir John Kaye, a witness to the events, through a long list of subsequent writers. William Dalrymple has given the saga a twist by presenting the 'other' side of the story. Dalrymple has endeavoured to reveal what the Afghans made of their country's invasion by a British army ruthlessly determined to topple a popular ruler and place their own protégé on the throne of Kabul.

The ousted emir was Dost Mohammed of the Barakzai branch of the Pashtun Abdali confederation. The usurper was Shah Shuja, a former emir of the rival Sadozai clan, whose turbulent life is woven into the war's narrative.

Return of a King is an account of this hapless pretender's changes of fortune, from an 'intelligent, gentle, and literate teenager' to a broken man abandoned by his erstwhile British champions and, in time-honoured Afghan tradition, assassinated to pave the way for the restoration of the exiled Dost Mohammed.



Dalrymple combines his thorough-going research into Persian and Pashtun manuscripts and published texts, as well as Russian source material, with the skills of an accomplished wordsmith, to produce what will undoubtedly rank as one of the seminal works on Britain's first military incursion into Afghanistan.

In his portrayal of the layers of deception and immorality behind the push to war, Dalrymple brings to light that the Russians never contemplated an attack on British India – not through Afghanistan nor anywhere else. The Russian threat, he accurately states, 'was hugely overplayed'.

With breathtaking disregard for the facts, the President of the East India Company's Board of Control, Lord Ellenborough, spread alarm about invasion throughout Whitehall. Another scaremonger, the rather scruffy Colonel De Lacy Evans, kick-started the panic with his hysterical polemic *On the Practicability of an Invasion of British India*. Sir William Hay Macnaghten (whose head ended up on a stave in Kabul), Governor-General Lord Auckland's most trusted adviser, became the principal architect of invasion, chiefly for purposes of self-aggrandisement.

From start to finish, the war stands as a catalogue of political, tactical, and social bungling on a monumental scale. The Duke of Wellington wrung his hands in despair that, at the very outset, Shah Shuja had been dispatched to reclaim his throne at the head of a column lacking a single Afghan in its ranks, with Hindu troops exacting taxes from Sunni Muslims.

The number two political officer in Kabul, Sir Alexander Burnes, was an incorrigible womaniser whose escapades brought about his brutal murder, which in turn touched off the fateful uprising. Macnaghten put the final touches on the calamity by slashing the subsidies granted to the tribal chiefs to keep the peace and the roads free from brigandage. So cocksure was Macnaghten of the army's security, he authorised the officers to send for their wives, leaving the Afghans to conclude the British were in occupation for the long-term.

> This hapless pretender was abandoned by his British champions and, in time-honoured Afghan tradition, assassinated.

The cantonments were built on low, exposed ground (where the British Embassy stands today) behind an absurdly long perimeter wall. As for the army itself, the top commander and his second-in-command shared an undisguised animosity. With Burnes and Macnaghten dead and the troops cut off behind their indefensible walls, the garrison threw in the towel and began the slow retreat to India, only to perish in the passes east of Kabul.

A monumental work such as this is bound to throw up a few nits ripe for the picking. Some will doubt the reliability of Afghan accounts, and Dalrymple may have missed an opportunity to make more of the scandal involving Burnes's reports of his embassy to Dost Mohammed's court. The documents were doctored to make it appear the emir was hostile to the British and prepared to seek Russian assistance. This led to a major scandal in Parliament and an angry exchange of letters to Lord Palmerston from Burnes's brother James, seeking to clear Alexander's name.

Dalrymple dismisses the affair in a single sentence and a footnote. This, however, is only a niggle, which scarcely detracts from Dalrymple's outstanding contribution to our knowledge of Britain's involvement in Afghanistan.

Jules Stewart

Free France's Lion: the life of Philippe Leclerc, de Gaulle's Greatest General

William Mortimer Moore
Casemate, £20
ISBN 978-1612000688

Nearly hidden among the dunes of Utah beach is a Sherman tank in the markings of the 2e DB, and a small memorial to Philippe Leclerc Relatively unknown outside France, had it not been for his early death, Leclerc – and not Charles de Gaulle – may well have become France's greatest figure to emerge from the Second World War

Born Philippe François Marie de Hauteclocque in 1902 (he adopted the pseudonym 'Leclerc' in 1940 to protect his family in Occupied France), he was a member of the Catholic aristocracy, something which occasionally put him at odds with some of those he commanded. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, much of Leclerc's military service was in French colonial North Africa, gaining him experience which would be recognised and put to good use by de Gaulle in 1940.

Following the fall of France, Leclerc twice escaped the Germans before reaching Britain and joining de Gaulle's Free French. Sent almost immediately to North Africa, Leclerc was critical in wresting several of France's colonies from Vichy control, and for two years was virtually the only active fighting commander of the Free French.

Following the fall of Axis (and Vichy) North Africa in 1943, Leclerc formed the 2e DB, the famous 2nd French Armoured Division, combining existing Free French and anti-fascist Spanish forces with former Vichy soldiers and sailors. No longer would Leclerc be dependent on 'hand-me-down' British equipment, but would be fully equipped by the USA.

Leclerc is most famous for the liberation of Paris in August 1944, Moore's account of which is a definite highlight of this book. Not only did Leclerc have to contend with the German occupying forces under Dietrich von Choltitz, and the threat that von Choltitz would turn Paris into another Warsaw, he also faced American opposition (since the Allied intention was to bypass Paris), and opposition from rival Communist and Gaullist resistance movements, each with an eye on post-war France.

Following his successful liberation of Paris, Leclerc went on to liberate Strasbourg and ultimately join the invasion of Germany. After VE Day, Leclerc was dispatched to French Indo-China to reassert French imperial control, but he came to realise that France no longer had the means or the will to recover its position and he advised his government to 'negotiate at all costs'.

But Leclerc was killed in an aeroplane crash in November 1947 and his advice went unheeded. It is tempting to imagine what might have happened had Leclerc lived and his advice been acted upon – no Dien Bien Phu? No US involvement in the region?

I first came across Leclerc as the result of research into the Long Range Desert Group and the fighting in Italian-controlled southern Libya. Leclerc's is a fascinating story, but one which has seldom been told in English until now. Author William Mortimer Moore does his subject full justice in an excellent account of what was an extraordinary life.

David Flintham

Battle on the Aisne 1914: the BEF and the birth of the Western Front

Jerry Murland
Pen & Sword, £19.99
ISBN 978-1848847699

This engaging work covers the little known abortive counterattack mounted by the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) immediately after the gruelling retreat from Mons in August 1914.

Jerry Murland, a noted authority on the early pre-trench-warfare campaigns of the Great War, has produced a detailed analysis of this battle both from the British and German standpoints. He has made extensive use of the diaries and letters of the combatants to produce a highly critical account of how the BEF was repulsed from the infamous Chemin des Dames during the latter half of September 1914, at a cost of 560 officers and some 12,000 men killed

On the outbreak of war, the British government, with predictable feebleness, had only committed four of its six available divisions to the BEF. The two divisions held back in the UK were to guard against foreign invasion – presumably from Outer Space – and to ensure against rebellion in Ireland/Ulster. Thus, when the German advance on Paris was rebuffed at the Marne, the BEF was somewhat under-strength for the task of driving the retreating Germans off the high ground north of the River Aisne.

The problem was further exacerbated by the fact that the 61-year-old commander of the BEF, Sir John French, was not up to the task intellectually or militarily, and quickly lost control of the battle. French was also unfortunate that British logistics were woefully inadequate, and the artillery was grossly inferior to that of the Germans. In short, the British Army, despite some excellent reforms since the débâcle of the Boer War, was not fit to fight a major continental war.

Murland devotes a chapter to each of the infantry divisions, which eventually numbered six once the two retained in the UK were committed. Diaries reveal interesting regimental rivalries, even scorn and contempt when units broke and ran. One Grenadier Guards officer habitually refers to the Germans as 'Dutchmen', and goes on to describe how when the Grenadiers finally handed their trenches over to the French, the latter found they were too short to see over the parapet!

The chapter on artillery highlights the inadequacy of British guns, the shortages of ammunition, and the lack of any clear tactical doctrine. Poor communications and lack of co-ordination resulted in numerous 'friendly fire' incidents, causing one exasperated diarist to exclaim 'why don't gunners have telescopes or field glasses? Then perhaps they wouldn't shell their own side so much!'

Other chapters describe the actions of the nascent Royal Flying Corps, the somewhat brutal treatment of prisoners of war, and the inevitable descent into trench warfare as the attack ground to a bloody standstill.

This book has a small but apposite collection of excellent photographs, a good selection of maps, and a very detailed BEF order of battle down to battalion level, as well as a comprehensive appendix that describes the 26 Aisne cemeteries. It comes highly recommended to anyone interested in the story of how the BEF endured its baptism of fire before the attrition of trench warfare set in

Mark Corby

ON THE HORIZON

When Washington Burned: an illustrated history of the War of 1812

Arnold Blumberg
Casemate, £25
ISBN 978-1612001012
With over 100 images of the battles, soldiers, and contemporary caricatures, this book illuminates an exciting, if too frequently forgotten episode in American history.

On the Precipice: Stalin, the Red Army leadership and the road to Stalingrad, 1931-1942

Peter Mezhiritsky
Helion & Company, £29.95
ISBN 978-1907677724
Popular among scholars and 20th-century history enthusiasts, this book offers alternative explanations for many pre-war and wartime events in Russia.

War Graves Revisited

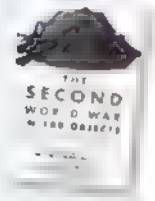
Doeke J Oostra
Eigen uitgave, 24.99
ISBN 978-9462063389
In this rare book, Oostra attempts to catalogue the war graves across much of Europe in an attempt to generate more interest in the subject and allow people to find the graves themselves.

Soldier of the Empire: the note-books of Captain Coignet

Edited by Bob Carruthers
Pen & Sword, £12.99
ISBN 978-1781591505
Initially published in Auxerre between 1851 and 1853, these memoirs detail the military service of Captain Coignet, who was conscripted in 1799 and survived Waterloo in 1815.

The Second World War in 100 Objects

Major-General Julian Thompson and Dr Allan R Millet
Carlton, £25
ISBN 978-1780971032
Written by two experts, this book explores the stories behind the items and puts them in their historical context to highlight their significance.



Gas! Gas! Quick, Boys! How chemistry changed the First World War

Michael Freemantle
Spellmount, £18.99
ISBN 978-0752466019
In this first all-encompassing study of the chemistry of the Great War, Freemantle reveals the true extent of the chemical arms race, and how industry evolved to meet the need for more powerful explosives.

Nomonhan, 1939: the Red Army's victory that shaped WWII

Stuart D Goldman
Naval Institute Press, £20
ISBN 978-1591143291

Nomonhan was a short, vicious, and intense war between the Soviet Union and Japan over a disputed area on the Mongolia and Manchuria border. The author contends that the battles here in 1939 set the scene for WWII. He gives a very good picture of the political scene in the period leading up to the main action on 1-3 July 1939.

In the chapter 'A Lesson in Limited War', Goldman gives an excellent account of the way in which the Russian high command met and defeated the Japanese. The Russians were led by General Georgy Zhukov who, having survived Stalin's purges of the armed forces, handled his forces superbly, incorporating the tactics he would use so successfully later to drive the Germans out of Russia after 1941.

The Russian attack started with a massed artillery bombardment, and was followed by equally massive combined armour and infantry attacks. The Japanese were shocked by the level of defeat. One of the staff officers who returned to Tokyo following the campaign, Major Tsuji Masanobu, ensured that Japan did not start offensive actions against the Soviet Union again.

The impact was felt well beyond the period 1941-1945, as decades later Russia and Japan are still disputing ownership of land and islands north of Japan. Indeed, the battle has had such an effect on the Japanese that they have still not signed a formal treaty with the Soviet Union or its successor state following WWII.

This is an excellent volume about an important battle which has been little reported in the West. For any student of the history of WWII, this book is a must read about one of the most important pre-war campaigns. It is well written, with good notes and indexing alongside an extensive bibliography. My one complaint, and it is relatively minor, is that the maps are poor. For such a well-written and -presented book, I would have hoped for better. Otherwise an excellent read.

Andy Kay

Gurkha Tales

Colonel John P Cross
Frontline Books, £19.99
ISBN 978-1848326903

Colonel John P Cross is a living legend in the British armed forces – very living, one might add, for at the tender age of 87 he still manages to spend half his waking hours trekking the hills of Nepal, where he has lived for several decades and has logged more than 10,000 miles on foot.

Gurkha Tales, his latest book, is an anthology of 30 entertaining and illuminating articles from his seven decades with the Gurkhas. Certainly, no one is better qualified to write about these Nepali warriors.

Cross joined the 1st Gurkha Rifles in 1944. He commanded the Jungle Warfare School and fought alongside the Gurkhas in the Malaya insurgency. His spoken Nepali is of native proficiency and, along with English and French, he speaks eight other Asian languages.

These tales take us from French Indo-China to Borneo, Malaya, and even the North-West Frontier in the last days of British India, where Cross served through the turbulent days of Partition and perspicaciously observed, 'We living there, and through it, reckoned that three generations would be needed to heal the wounds of madness.'

Cross takes us to the beginning of his army career, as a 17-year-old volunteer posted to India at the height of the Second World War. That led to his close relationship with the Gurkhas, which was forged, he explains, spending the equivalent of 35 years 'under the canopy' with them in the jungle.

The articles span the past six decades of the Gurkhas' British Army history, from the final days of the Second World War to the Indonesian confrontation of the 1960s, along with memoirs of service in Laos in the 1970s, and the author's life in Nepal. Taken as a whole, the book provides a privileged insight into a unique – and one of the most enduring – cross-cultural relationships in British military history.

Jules Stewart

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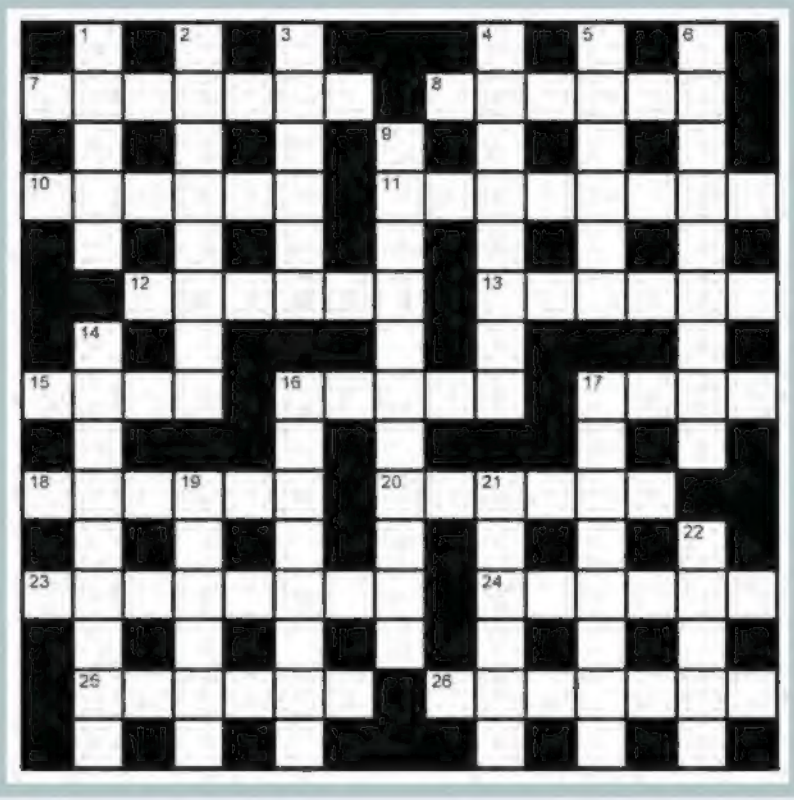

MHM CROSSWORD

Test your military history knowledge in our new regular crossword. The answers will be revealed in next month's issue of *MHM*.

ACROSS

7 Supersonic bomber built by Convair, first flown in 1956 (7)

8 British field marshal after whom an overcoat is named (6)

10 Royal Navy ship of the Algerine class, launched in 1945 (6)

11 _____ Confederacy, a league of Native American tribes, also known as Six Nations (8)

12 Delta-winged jet fighter built by Dassault (6)

13 British cruiser which fought at the Battle of the River Plate (6)

15 Early type of bayonet (4)

16 First name of the 'Desert Fox' (5)

17 First World War Victoria Cross recipient, appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1938 (4)

18 Member of the British military police (6)

20 ___ Braddock, British general killed during the French and Indian War (6)

23 Native American tribe, also known as Snake (8)

24 Robert _____, English writer, wounded at the Battle of the Somme (6)

25 Edict of _____, issued in 1598 at the end of the French Wars of Religion (6)

26 Four-engine bomber built by Handley Page, first flown in October 1939 (7)

DOWN

1 _____ Murphy, American actor, the most decorated US soldier of the Second World War (5)

2 David _____, founder of the SAS (8)

3 Native American tribe, an ally of the British in the American War of Independence (6)

4 Portrayed by Rod Steiger in the film *Waterloo* (8)

5 _____ Auchinleck, British field marshal, commander in India and Pakistan in 1947 (6)

6 Soldiers also known as sappers (9)

9 Warship designed for the clearance of floating explosive devices (11)

14 US mountain range crossed by British forces in 1755, during an attempt to attack Fort Duquesne (9)

16 Experimental British submarine launched in 1954 and scrapped in 1965 (8)

17 SS regiment, one of four at the beginning of the Second World War (8)

19 Company that built the T-41 Mescalero military training aircraft (6)

21 Battle of July 1809, a decisive victory for France over Austria (6)

22 Battle of the Franco-Prussian War (5)

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We continue our online caption competition with an image from French Light Infantry feature. Pit your wit against *MHM* readers at **www.military-history.org/competitions**.

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Busty La Roux, I have loved you for so many years and never had the courage to say. Will you make the happiest officer in the world...?

Marcus Joseph

RUNNER-UP:

'The lads are never gonna believe this' thought Jones, hurriedly texting the entire officers' mess on his iPhone 5.

Dan Maguire

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ANSWERS **JANUARY ISSUE | MHM28**

ACROSS **7** Parthia, **8** Stripes, **9** Carlist, **10** Pioneer, **12** Hornpipe, **13** Askari, **15** Lair, **16** Sepoy, **18** Sato, **20** Glider, **23** Rhodesia, **24** Cuirass, **26** Harrier, **27** Pigtail, **28** Arundel. **DOWN** **1** Saratoga, **2** Stalingrad, **3** Airships, **4** Attila, **5** *Lion*, **6** Meteor, **11** Leopard, **14** Kesselring, **17** Yeomanry, **19** Triremes, **21** Laurie, **22** Russia, **25** Rats

The Royal Enfield Flying Flea

Above A Flying Flea packed in its parachute cradle.

Designed by the Germans, copied by the British, and thrown out of aeroplanes over occupied Europe, the Royal Enfield Flying Flea was the most successful military motorcycle developed for use by airborne troops in the Second World War. Ironically, the British Army would not have benefited from this lightweight vehicle had it not been for Nazi anti-Semitism.

During the 1930s, DKW Motorcycles of Germany had exported their RT100 model to the Netherlands. However, their Dutch importer, RS Stokvis & Sons, had Jewish directors and in 1938 DKW was forced to withdraw the franchise when the Nazi government banned trading with Jewish-owned businesses. Keen to replace a popular model, RS Stokvis turned to Royal Enfield in the UK, who copied the frame and forks from DKW and added a 125cc engine. Unveiled at the Rotterdam show in 1939, few of these machines were produced before the outbreak of war, and after that Royal Enfield concentrated on manufacturing conventional 250cc and 350cc motorcycles for use by despatch riders.

> The British Army would not have benefited from the Flea had it not been for Nazi anti-Semitism.

That might have been the end of the Flying Flea, but by 1942 the War Department was looking for a lightweight motorcycle suitable for use by paratroopers, and the Flying Flea was submitted for trials. Radio contact often proved problematic, with sets becoming lost or damaged during drops, so motorcycles became an essential communication tool. Weighing just 126lb (less than one third of the weight of the popular Norton 16H WD model), the Flying Flea seemed ideal on paper – and it proved reliable in trials.

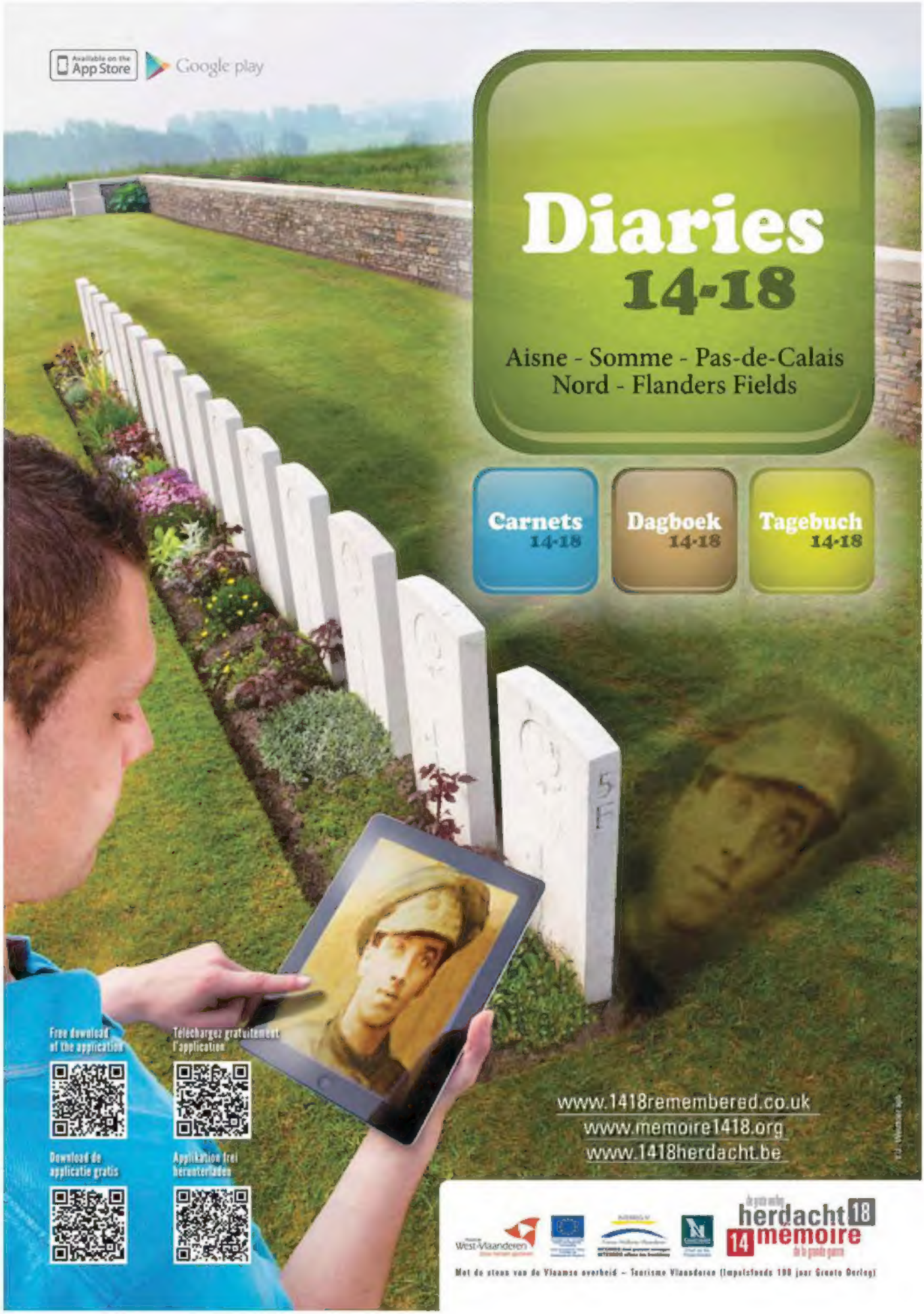
Royal Enfield strengthened the wheels, which had buckled on landing during testing, and added folding footrests and handlebars so that the bike could be packed in a steel tubular cage and attached to a parachute. Production of the rather unimaginatively named WD/RE commenced in 1943, and it was not long before the Flying Flea, as it was soon nicknamed, was in active service.

In practice, few of these bikes were dropped by parachute, as manhandling a motorcycle and cradle weighing more than 200lbs out of an aircraft was no easy task, let alone doing so accurately over a dropping zone. The majority of Flying Fleas instead arrived by glider: they could be packed in four at a time using a special harness. Their light weight made them easy to pick up and move over obstacles, and ideal for traversing rough terrain, where heavier vehicles would get bogged down.

The Flying Flea was not the only motorcycle that the British developed for paratroopers. Around the same time the secret Military Research Establishment designed the Welbike, a small folding motorcycle that would fit into a standard parachute container. Unfortunately a combination of low power and tiny wheels, plus the need to reassemble the bike having removed it from the container, meant that these bikes were impractical in the heavy combat situations experienced by paratroopers.

After the war the Flying Flea enjoyed a new lease of life, providing inexpensive transport in times of austerity, and it remained in production until the early 1950s.

Left An illustration of the Flea in action.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